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PAMPHLETS.

1. AN INQUIRY INTO THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE SO-CALLED FIRST MEETING-HOUSE, PRESERVED BY THE ESSEX INSTITUTE AT SALEM, MASS.

BY EBEN PUTNAM.

2. THE "OLD RELIC," OR THE FIRST MEETING HOUSE IN SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS.—A REPLY TO CERTAIN STRICTURES IN MR. RANTOUL'S "POWERFUL DEFENCE," ETC.

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3. A LETTER TO THOMAS CARROLL, CONCERNING THE FIRST MEETING HOUSE IN SALEM, MASS.

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AN INQUIRY INTO THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE SO-CALLED FIRST MEETING HOUSE AT SALEM, MASS.

BY EBEN PUTNAM.

“ . . . the genuineness of the relic rests upon the dictum of no one man. Responsible names have been in print for forty years, as vouchers for its claim, and as nobody has come forward during this period either to discredit the facts these local antiquaries thought they had established, or to refute the reasoning on which they rested their deductions, or to produce new facts not known to them, which ought to impair the value of their results, I suppose the question of authenticity must now be considered closed, so far as such a question can be.” From address of R. S. Rantoul, president of the Essex Institute, 15 May, 1899, advocating restoring and preserving the “relic”.

Two hundred and seventy years ago there was gathered in Salem a church, the first religious society organized in America. Contemporaneous accounts of the formation of this church have come down to us, but no description of the place where that event occurred. It has been suggested that the ceremonies were conducted in the open air.

There is in Salem a small frame building, and it is claimed that the frame at least—the outer shell is modern—is that of the first meeting-house erected in Salem. There is no record extant of the date of the erection, or of the dimensions of the first meeting-house at Salem. The earliest mention of the meeting-house upon the town records refers to repairs of a building standing in 1635.

Rev. William Bentley prepared “A description and history of Salem” which was published by the Mass. Hist. Soc. pp. 212-288 of Vol. VI, 1st series, of their collections for 1799.

In this valuable historical sketch Dr. Bentley stated (page 226)

“An unfinished building, of one story, was used occasionally for public worship in Salem, from 1629 to 1634. A proper house was then erected by Mr. Norton, who was to have £100 sterling for it. The old church now stands upon the same spot. The house was rebuilt in 1671, to be 60 feet by 50, not to cost above £1000 currency.”

The claims advanced for the “relic” preserved at Salem are that it was built by Norton in 1634, that it is the frame of the first meeting-house erected in Massachusetts, which was used until 1672, and that it received an addition equal to its original proportions in 1639.

The site of the first meeting house was nearly the same as that occupied by subsequent buildings and is still the property of the religious society succeeding to the First parish in Salem.

No doubt during the pleasant weather of the summer of 1629 open air meetings sufficed, and the governor’s “great house” or such other place as was convenient for so large an assembly as surely gathered on the Sabbath, may have met temporary requirements during inclement weather. But haste would have been made to provide suitable accommodations against the winter. The meeting-house would have been designed to meet the requirements of the present and expected congregations. It has ever been that ecclesiastical structures are planned beyond the ability of completion at the expected time. That this was the case at Salem is probable. Carpenters and all such found their services greatly in demand.

That the people of Salem worshipped in a building sufficiently large to accommodate the rapidly growing congregation, is the writer’s belief, and that the claims put forward in assertion of the identity of the frame of the so-called “First Church” are founded on incomplete and untrustworthy evidence is also his belief.

Dr. Bentley appears to have had no other than traditionary

authority or some chance reference* for his statement. He did not attempt to give the dimensions of the building, nor did he, though writing in 1799, and having been pastor of a Salem church and an ardent antiquary for many years, know of the existence of any portion of the old church. Felt, writing twenty years later, repeats Bentley's statement and apparently knew nothing further.

Nearly forty years later the attention of some members of the Essex Institute was called to a shed standing in a remote part of Salem on land formerly belonging to Thorndike Proctor. The tradition regarding this shed follows†. It will be noted that here the words "made from" are used.

"Enos Pope, son of Joseph 2d, was born in 1690; he lived near the Fowler house in Boston street. In 1718 he built the house now occupied by Mr. Wilkins, at the foot of Gallows Hill, which was within a few rods of this old building, in which Enos 2d was born in 1721, and who died at the age of 92. Enos 3d was born in 1769. My recollections of my grandfather, Enos 2d, are very clear and distinct. Until a few months of his death he was very active, clear-minded and communicative. He was frequently inquired of by people with regard to previous events, and he was so exact in his account of dates and particulars, that it was supposed he had kept a journal for many years, which was not the case.

"I remember his pointing out the course of the old road, which passed the tavern house and joined the present street directly opposite his house. With Enos Pope 3d I lived near forty years. He was full of information and anecdotes, and yet very cautious and careful in his statements. It is from him and his sisters, who lived in the family long after their father's death, that I got the account. It was never doubted

* In a pamphlet entitled "The Story of the Meeting House built at Salem in 1634-5", page 8, is a note to the effect that Bentley may have derived his authority from papers relating to "Salem's Ancient Things" (see pages 78-9 of Diary of Benj. Lynde) which were loaned by Judge Lynde to Rev. Thomas Prince about 1736. These papers are not with the Prince Collection in the Boston Public Library nor has any trace of them been found.

† Report of Committee, Edition 1897, pp. 13, 20.

by them. It should be remembered that the persons I have named were separated only by death, although very long-lived; father, son and grandson have lived together in the same house, and the connection that bound the past to the present was never broken for a day. Two persons are now living who were born in the old tavern, viz., Benj. Proctor, aged 84, and his sister. I have just seen them, and find that they well remember that it was always known as having been made from the 'First Meeting House'. Mr. Proctor says he has heard his father say so more than a hundred times. A few years ago I mentioned to an older brother of theirs, since dead, what I had heard of its early history, and found him much better informed than I was, and much interested in having the house preserved. It was from him I first learned that the house itself affords so much evidence of its origin."

A committee appointed by the Essex Institute examined the evidences, and with more enthusiasm than historical accuracy accepted as final the opinion that the frame was the identical frame which served to carry the covering of the original church building. The report of the committee, as well as a sketch of the church, intending to corroborate the findings of the committee, are printed in pamphlet form and distributed by the Essex Institute.

It is well now to revert to what is actually known concerning the church, and to discard all theories based on tradition, circumstantial evidence, or reasonable hypothesis.

WHAT ARE THE KNOWN FACTS.

It is known that church services were held as soon after Higginson's arrival* as possible, and from our knowledge of Endicott and his company we can surmise that regular religious meetings had been held previously. We remain in ignorance as to where these early meetings were held.

When the "meeting-house" was erected it stood where its successors stood, allowing for some small variation in the loca-

* June 29, 1629.

tion of the walls of each structure. On Oct. 8, 1718, Rev. Samuel Fiske* was ordained pastor. According to the record, which may be found on page 105 of White's "New England Congregationalism," the church met for the ordination service in the new church, now almost finished. It was begun to be raised on May 21, 1718. The congregation first set to worship God in it July 13, 1718. "This is the third house erected for the public worship of God, on the same spot of land on which the first church was built in this town, and which was the first in the province." Mr. Fiske, who made the above record, was the grandson of Rev. John Fiske, who has left us a copy of the earliest records of the church, dating from 1637, and older than the present records of the church. The elder Fiske was assistant to Hugh Peter.

At this ordination in 1718 there were present many persons to whom the story of the church building must have been familiar. Rev. John Higginson, the son of Rev. Francis Higginson, the founder of the church, was born in 1616, and admitted to the Salem church at the age of fifteen, before his father's death. In 1659 he was called to the church at Salem, and served there until 1708, when he died. Here was a man whose lifetime and personal knowledge covered the whole of the history of the Salem church over which he was pastor, to a date within ten years of the entry on the records to which so much importance attaches.

There are two important statements in the above records. First, that the then building was the third erected on the same spot on which the first church was built. Second, that the first building was the first church building in the province, for the record plainly refers to the building, not the organization.

It could not have been the first church built unless erected prior to 1632, for the first meeting-house in Roxbury, which stood on Meeting House Hill, was erected in that year. Drake

* Rev. Samuel Fiske was an ancestor of the writer, who also descends from Rev. Francis Higginson, Rev. John Higginson and Rev. John Sparhawk, all pastors of this church; also from Rev. John Fiske, sometime assistant to Rev. Hugh Peter at Salem, and grandfather of Rev. Samuel Fiske.

says of it: "It was a rude and 'unbeautified' structure, with a thatched roof,* destitute of shingles or plaster; without gallery, pew or spire, and probably similar to that of Dedham in its dimensions, the latter being thirty-six feet long, twenty feet wide and twelve feet high in the stud."

The meeting-house in Boston, which was sold in 1639 was erected in 1632. At that date there were meeting-houses in other towns. The meeting-house in Cambridge was built in 1632 and had a bell. There had been very few inhabitants in Cambridge prior to that date. In 1650 the old building was replaced with one forty feet square.

Dorchester had erected a meeting-house in 1633 or earlier. This was replaced by a larger structure in 1645, apparently at a cost of £250.

The second meeting house in Salem was erected in 1670, and superseded the first meeting-house, which was erected "the first in the Province."

The original church records have disappeared. Those now in existence date only from 1660, but contain copies of what was judged worthy of preservation. The town records begin with entries in the Book of Grants dated 1 Oct., 1634. The Town Proceedings begin with a record of Dec. 26, 1636. The Book of Grants was begun in 1640, and probably contains a copy of all grants of lands prior to that date of which the recorder, Emanuel Downing, could discover.

On the 22, 6th mo., 1635, the town ordered that Mr. Endicott and others should consider some convenient place for shops, and from the record we learn of "divers speeches about convenient places for shops, for workmen, as at the head of the meeting-house† from William Lord's corner fence."

On the 28th 1st mo., 1636, William Lord had land granted

* It is doubtful if the church at Salem was thatched, for Rev. Francis Higginson wrote, before the winter of 1629, "At this instant we are setting a brick kiln on work to make bricks and tiles for the building of our houses."

† In this connection as showing the value of a location near the meeting-house, it is interesting to compare the proceedings which took place at Boston four years later regarding the site of the meeting-house. The traders who had erected stalls and shops near the meeting-house objected to its transfer. See Winthrop I. 318.]

him in exchange for part of his house lot which he hath given to the meeting-house. On the 15 May, 1660, an agreement was entered into between Lord and the Selectmen to settle "a difference about some land about the meeting-house, part of the said Lord's house lott formerly which he the said Lord saith was never yet paid for . . . to satisfie him for all that part of his house lott which was formerly layed to the setting of the meeting-house upon, and all that land that is now unfenced round about the meeting-house, and what else about his house or houses that lyeth unfenced."

In 1669 Lord sued John Horne for dwelling upon and possessing part of his land belonging to his house lot where he now dwelleth upon pretence of a grant from the Towne or the Selectmen of Salem which they had not power to do.

John Horne had a grant of land between Lord and Hilliard 18 Nov., 1661. Lord had succeeded to the estate formerly possessed by Rev. Francis Higginson, whose house had been built for him by the company. After his death in 1630 it was given to his widow who allowed Rev. Roger Williams, her husband's successor in the ministry, to occupy it until sold to John Woolcott. Woolcott sold to Lord, 8 Oct., 1635.

This parsonage lot naturally was adjoining to the church and by vote of the company was originally designed to pass to successive ministers,* but from the circumstances brought about by Higginson's death was diverted from its original use.

Skelton, Higginson's associate, had land extending from the road now Essex street to the South river and east of the meeting house.

In view of the date of Lord's purchase of the Higginson property the land he gave to the meeting-house before 28th 1 mo., 1636 [i. e. April, 1636, new style] and which in 1660 is spoken of as part of his house lot formerly laid to the setting of the meeting-house upon, it is quite evident that either reference is made to the addition of 1639 or that the first

* Young's Chronicles, pp. 207-12. agreements with the ministers.

meeting-house was put upon land enclosed within the parsonage* lot and to which Lord may have had some sort of a claim through his purchase. The town certainly intended to quiet any claim to land about the meeting-house.

On the 15th 3 mo., 1637, the town remitted freely to Mr. Sharpe £4 he had underwritten for the meeting-house. John Sweet, who had underwritten £2, was not so fortunate.

On the 16th 11th mo., 1637, accounts showing that Adams was paid £1.7.10 for daubing the meeting-house, and John Bushnell 7 sh. 4 d. "toward the glassing of the windows in the meeting-house," were approved.

On the 21st, 10th mo., 1638, it was "Agreed that there should forthwith an addition to the meeting-house be builded, and that there should be a rate made and levied for the payment thereof, the seven men to see it effected and to pay for it." The result of this vote is seen by the action of the selectmen who, on the 4th, 12th mo., 1638, agreed with John Pickering to build a meeting-house twenty-five feet long and "the breadth† of the old building". He was to receive £63 or more, and finish his contract in four months.

In Dec., 1641, the General Court allowed Salem to present their meeting-house as their watch house, thereby freeing themselves from neglect of the law passed in 1637, that "every town shall provide a sufficient watch house upon paine of £5." Charlestown, Hingham and Lynn had the same privileges granted to them at this court.

In 1646 it was ordered the bell of the meeting-house should ring on notice of burials.

In 1646 nails for covering the meeting-house are promised by Captain Hawthorne and Mr. Corwin, who are to take their pay in corn. The following year Mr. Corwin promised to provide speedily for the covering of the meeting-house five

* For an account of the dwelling houses of the early ministers see a paper by W. P. Upham, Essex Institute Historical Collections, VIII, 250.

† The measure of the breadth of the old building is unknown. The supposition that the dimension was 17 feet is based simply upon the existence of a shed 17x20 feet.

hundred nails. Also, he and William Lord undertake to provide stones and clay for the repair of the meeting-house.

In 1647 action is taken on the town's boards for the meeting-house. In 1655 payments are authorized to repair the town house for the school and watch, and to repair the meeting-house. On the 22d, 6th mo., 1657, a rate of £50 was voted for the meeting-house, and a like sum for the minister's house. and £18 for a new bell and hanging thereof. Also that year five shillings were paid for one hundred clapboard for the meeting-house, and £18 to Mr. Corwin for the bell and Mrs Goose, and £5 to Mr. Brown for hanging the bell. Mr. Brown also received £50 for repairing the meeting-house. [*Salem Town Records.*]

These items show that a meeting-house had been erected prior to 1635; that constant repairs were necessary; that in 1638 more room was needed, which was supplied in 1639; that in 1657 a considerable alteration was made in the meeting-house and at a large expense, and at the same time the town bought a new bell which was mounted in place of the old one.

Of the dimensions of the meeting-house there is no record except the hint conveyed in the contract awarded to Pickering, and of which we print a fac-simile. In view of the vote immediately prior to the awarding of that contract, undoubtedly the work done by Pickering was to build an addition to the meeting-house, not to construct a new building separate from the old. The breadth of the old building was to be the breadth of the addition, which was twenty-five feet in length. The ingenious reasoning of the committee of the Essex Institute by which it was attempted to prove that the addition simply doubled the seating capacity of the old house was based upon the fact that the dimensions of an old shed found on Boston street required such reasoning.

This meeting-house stood until 1672, although the new church, the second edifice, was erected by reason of a vote of the town taken in 1670.

The dimensions of the second meeting-house were 60 feet by 50, and 20 feet stud. In 1672 when the "Village" people got permission to build a meeting-house they built one measuring 28 feet by 34, and 16 feet stud. The population of the precinct at that time was, not unlikely, nearly as large as that of Salem in 1629 when, probably, the first meeting-house was erected.

The new meeting-house was placed just west of the old house, and it was not till Aug. 17, 1672, that a general town meeting was called "to consider whether the old meeting-house shall be taken down or sold as it stands." The record of this meeting stands as follows :

"Att A General Town meeting held the 17th August: 1672. Its voated that the old meeting-house be reserved for the towne use, and to build a skoole house and watch house. Its voated that the old meeting house shall be taken down and that every family in the towne, and which belong to the towne, shall send one man of a family to helpe to take it downe and to carry it into some convenient place wher it may (be stored) be reserved for the townes use, and that for time when to begin to doe it and the number of men to worke each day it is left to the Selectmen to appoint. The old pulpitt and the Deacons seat is given to the Farmers. Voated. The stones of the underpinning of the old meeting house and the clay of the old meeting house is given to Jno. Fisk. [The words in parentheses were written over, then scratched.] At a meeting of the selectmen the 17 August, 1672. Its ordered that the old meeting house be begun to be taken downe the 10 of this present month, and the constables are appointed to warne 30 men a day to appear to helpe to take it downe, and they are to begin to warne them at Strong Water brook, and soe downwards to the lower end of the towne."

The town at this date felt the need of better schoolhouse

accommodations, as well as a more convenient town house. The present town house had been in use as early as 1652. On March 25, 1671, the town voted "the selectmen shall take care and provide a house for Mr. Epps to keep skoole in till his year be out which will be in July or August next." By a subsequent vote it appears that the school ended July 18, and the new year began immediately.

The old meeting-house was taken down, for under date of Jan. 28, 1672-73, it is recorded that £5-3-0 was paid to Mr. Gedney, Sr., for expense in taking down the old meeting-house and for the selectmen's expenses. Also paid four shillings to Nathaniel Pickman, Sr., "for work to ye old meeting-house".

The selectmen in April, 1673, called a town meeting for the 21st of April, to consider "concerning building a school house and watch house of the timber of the old meeting house or otherwise disposing of it". The meeting, so called, "Voated that Mr. William Browne, Sr., Captain Price and Mr. Samuel Gardner are appointed and empowered to agree with a carpenter or carpenters to build a house for the towne which may serve for a school house and watch house and towne house of the timber of the old meeting-house according as the timber will bear".

Surely these votes effectually prove that the old meeting-house, twice extensively repaired, had been torn down; that nearly the entire able-bodied force of the town was needed, in daily gangs of thirty, to get it down; that the timber was stored for future service; and finally was ordered to be inspected, and such parts as were suitable employed in the construction of a large building which should serve as a school-house, a watch-house and a town-house.

So far we can follow the old first meeting-house. From this last vote it is evident that the principal timbers of the house, which had been torn down, not moved away, were considered town property and were utilized when occasion offered.

A year later the town was still without its new town house,

for on 10d. 9mo., 1674, it was voted: "The towne house shall be sett up by the prison, and William Donton to raise itt with what speed he can."

Three years later, June 16, 1677, it was voted that the town house be moved to the street near about John Roapes's house, and on Sept. 8, 1677, Daniel Andrews "is to build the chimnies and to fill and larth the walls of ye town house and underpin the same. Jno. Scelling to finish ye town house, to shingle, clapboard, floare, windows, staires and all other things needful with respect to carpenters' work . . . and to have £20".*

THE IMPOSTURE.

It is, then, with interest that one turns to the pamphlet distributed by the Essex Institute at Salem, entitled "The Story of the Meeting-house Built at Salem in 1634-35", purporting to describe the small framed building removed to the grounds of the society between 1860-5, which is jealously guarded as the frame of the first meeting-house in Salem. This shed, out-house, annex to a tavern, so much honored and which it is now proposed† to "restore" to its "original appearance", and to further protect by enclosing it within an addition to the Institute building, is seventeen by twenty feet, and by a most ingenious course of reasoning has been declared to fit on to the addition built by Pickering in 1639. It is a building which, under the most favorable auspices, could never have seated one half of the inhabitants of Salem in 1629. In 1637 there were nearly nine hundred inhabitants of Salem,** and the spirit of religion in those days called for frequent and lengthy services. Nor would attendance by relays of the faithful have been looked upon with favor. Yet we are asked to believe that this small room, not larger than an ordinary sized bedroom, during a decade sufficed the people of Salem, a town of

* It is needless to state that £20 at this period was equivalent to a much larger sum at the present time.

† Pages 8, 9, of the annual report of the Essex Institute for the year ending May 15, 1899, in address of the president, R. S. Rantoul.

** Salem records; enumeration of heads of families and number in each family, for carrying out the distribution of certain lands. See Essex Inst. Hist. Col. IX, 101.

so great importance that there was reasonable hope of its selection as the capital.

The report of the committee is a mixture of fact and fiction. It begins with the mis-statement: "We have the assurance from the records that the congregation having worshipped from 1629 to 1634 in an unfinished building of one story, agreed, that latter year, with Mr. Norton, to build a suitable meeting-house which should not exceed the amount of £100." In their final report they particularize further, even daring to give the month that Norton received his contract, and stating the trees were felled in the winter of 1635, and that the building was erected in the summer of that year; that the glazed windows probably were ordered from England in 1636 and were not added till 1637 and paid for in 1638.

We have already shown what the records do say regarding the meeting-house. Certainly there is not a word in the records upon which the above statement could be based, except the payment for daubing and the small sum for glassing the windows, and there was a glasshouse in Salem in 1638.

But the most woeful misrepresentation of the vote of the town in 1672 appears on page seventeen of the latest edition (1897) of the pamphlet mentioned. There it is said the town "voted, that the old meeting-house be reserved for the town's use, to build a school house and watch house", and be carried 'into some convenient place, where it may be reformed for the town's use'."

A comparison of the lines just quoted with the actual record (page 216) is quite sufficient to create distrust of the entire report of the committee. While it is not necessary to criticise further the reports of this committee of 1860, it will be profitable to point out a few inaccuracies in the "story of the meeting-house", probably written in 1897, and abounding with learned references, and which undoubtedly has the countenance of the presiding officers of the society. It begins by stating "the object of these pages is to establish the fact that the little

structure to which they refer encloses the frame of the earliest Puritan meeting-house reared on this continent, of which a trace remains". This closing clause apparently was not added as a saving clause, for the author on the next page shows that he was not aware of any structure intended as a meeting-house having been erected prior to 1634, either in Boston, Cambridge, or Roxbury.

The school and watch were accommodated in the town house not the meeting-house, as early as 1655, as the extract from the record as printed on page 215 makes plain.

A few words as to the number of men called upon in 1672 to tear down the old meeting-house. In 1672 there were fully 300 able-bodied men* liable for watch duty within the limits of the "watch" at Salem town, not including at least forty families, probably more, outside the limits. Therefore some idea may be arrived at of the number of days it took to tear the old meeting-house down. Certainly to demolish a structure 45 by 17 feet, of one story, about double the size of the little shed on view at Salem, could not require the services of thirty men for a week or two; and we know from the record that the building was taken down, not removed.

The old meeting-house was called upon to accommodate nearly as many persons as the new. In 1657 the people living on Bass river side, now Beverly, had permission to maintain preaching. They were set off to form a church 4 July, 1667. Preaching was set up at the Village (Danvers) in 1672 and a church formed there in 1689. The Marblehead church was gathered 13 Aug., 1684, but they had had preaching among themselves before that.

* In 1667 the residents of what afterward became Salem Village parish remonstrated against being called upon to watch Salem town. In their petition the remonstrants state that there were "near 300 able persons within the limits of the watch and ourselves left out". Also that on an emergency Salem would raise 400 men. See Putnam's Hist. Mag. Vol. V, p. 144. Bentley says, p. 223, that in 1678 there were 300 polls in the township. The tax list for 1683 is extant and enumerates 576 males. In 1686 there were 100 freeholders in the town. Beverly had been set off 14 Oct., 1668. Felt, p. 257, estimates that as there were twenty-five tithing men in Salem in 1677 there were about 250 families there, consequently he reckons over 1400 inhabitants at that date, which is probably an under rather than over estimate.

It is a pity, of course, to deprive Salem of so interesting a relic as the "old First Church", but historical accuracy is the main point. It is strange that the imposition, not wilful of course, should have lasted so long and in the face of at least two investigations into the history of the building, as evidenced by two unsigned articles, the one quoted above and the other printed in the "Historical Collections of the Essex Institute" for 1890.

The article printed above appeared, with some slight changes, in the Boston Evening Transcript of July 26, 1899. The author had for several years intended to make an independent investigation of the evidence existing, as his scepticism was not lessened by conversations with the late Henry Wheatland and other antiquaries.

The author believes sufficient proof has been presented to show the need of fresh and impartial investigation of the subject. The exhibition of the building conveys a wrong impression of the beginnings of Salem to adults and children alike. Thousands visit it each year and representations of it are shown everywhere.

It seems to the author that all that may be claimed for the present structure is that according to a tradition not disproven by records, some wood from the meeting-house torn down in 1673, *of which a part was probably erected in 1529 and standing in 1635*, was used in building this shed. So careful a statement should be made as to *prevent misconceptions*, especially concerning the dimensions and design of the meeting-house, which was probably a commodious, dignified and fitting structure for its day and use.

A perfect example of the manner in which research and argument concerning the first meeting-house in Salem has been conducted appears on pages 158-160 of Vol. 25 of the Hist. Col. of the Essex Institute. In an article entitled "The Gov. Endecott Estate," but under a sub-title, "Was Gov. Endecott's House the First Place of Worship?," appears the following alleged quotation from a letter from James Cudworth of Scituate to his step-father Stoughton dated Dec., 1634, quoted in part in Vol. I, p. 194, Colonial Series, English State Papers. Says the writer of the Endecott article, "These are his* words—"Some of the church of Salem have cut out the cross on the flag or antient that they carry before them when they train. Capt. Endecott, their Captain, a holy, honest man, utterly abandons it. His house, being the largest, is their Meeting-house, where they are as yet but 60 persons."

The writer of the Endecott article (which is unsigned) further says: "The query suggested by Cudworth's use of the word 'meeting-house' is whether he meant that the Governor's house was their place of worship or their place of rendezvous 'when they train'." Does he mean by '60 persons' sixty heads of families in the church, sixty men capable of bearing arms, or sixty attendants at divine worship? Or is Cudworth in error and speaking without sufficiently exact information?"

By reference to the authority given it appears that the words given above in quotations are not the words nor the meaning of Cudworth. The quotation, by the editor of the Colonial papers, from James Cudworth's letter is simply "cut out the cross in the flag or ancient that they carry before them when they train". The editor further gives the sense of Cudworth in the following words. "Capt. Endecott, their captain, a holy, honest man, utterly abandons it. His† house, being the largest, is their meeting-house, where they are as yet but 60 persons."

* [I. e. Cudworth's. E. P.]

† "His" refers to Cudworth. The reference is not as ambiguous as it appears here, for in the long paragraph—of short sentences—"he" or "his" refers back to Cudworth whose name appears in the opening sentence.

This volume of Colonial papers was published in 1860 and that same year Mr. S. G. Drake contributed to the N. E. Hist. Gen. Reg., Vol. 14, pp. 101-4, the letter of Cudworth in full. Following are the exact words of Cudworth: "One thing I canot but relate, & that not only with grefe for & with feare of what will be the event of a strange thinge put in practice by sum in the Church of Salem; but by whome I heare not, and that is they have Cut out the Crosse in the flage, or Ansient that they cari before them when they trayne. Inded it is contrary to the mindes & willes of all that I cann heare of. Captaine Indicat there Captaine is a holy honest man & dus utterly abandon it & who are the Aegeentes in it I cannot heare. Now, as concerning my owne pertickuler I have . . . as yet, the best house in the plantation, though but a meane one My house is the meeting house because it is the biggest, but wee are but few, as yet, in number—not passinge 60 persons."

How different is Cudworth's statement than presented in the Endecott article! It appears his information regarding the meeting-house and the population does not refer to Endecott's house nor Salem but to his own house and to Scituate. Neither was the word meeting-house capitalized as in the Endecott article in either Cudworth's letter or the Colonial Papers.

*With the Compliments
of the Author.*

THE

FIRST MEETING HOUSE IN SALEM
MASSACHUSETTS

A REPLY TO CERTAIN STRICTURES

MADE BY

ROBERT S. RANTOUL, PRESIDENT OF THE ESSEX INSTITUTE

IN HIS

"POWERFUL DEFENCE OF THE OLD SALEM RELIC"

PRIVATELY READ BY HIM AT A MEETING OF THE DIRECTORS
OF THE INSTITUTE OCT. 2, 1899 AND PUBLICLY
ADVERTISED BY HIM IN THE "BOSTON
EVENING TRANSCRIPT"
OCT. 18, 1899

BY

ABNER CHENEY GOODELL
Senior Vice-President of the Institute

(Read at a meeting of the Directors, Feb. 5, 1900)

CORRIGENDA.

Page 9, line 22, for "*mittiori*" read "*mitiori*."

" 16, line 13, for "to" read "on."

" 19, line 2, insert "next" after "successor," and *dele* the parentheses in this and the next line.

" " line 3, insert a comma after "presidency."

" 21, line 24, *dele* "other."

" 22, line 13, at the end, *dele* the comma.

" 25, line 24, substitute "employing" for "and employed."

" 26, line 24, substitute "unfitted" for "spoiled."

" 37, first line, *dele* the comma after "meeting."

" " line 33, *dele* "superficial."

" 43, line 35, *dele* the dash.

" " line 36, insert, after "schoolhouse," a comma, and, after "which," the words, "as I have already intimated."

" 49, line 17, for "alloted" read "allotted."

" 53, line 22, for "declares" read "declared."

" 59, line 31, transfer comma from after "junior" to after "added."

" 66, line 22, for "publication" read "publications."

Mr. President and Gentlemen :

At a meeting of this Board on the second of October last, after listening to the reading of a most extraordinary paper by the President, I moved that it be laid upon the table, and asked to be permitted to reply to it. In view of the confusion of dates and circumstances, and the contradictions and irrelevancies, in which that paper abounds, and which must be duly weighed and winnowed in order to discover precisely the grievance complained of, I asked that I be given until this meeting to formulate my reply.

As the President, with the records before him, and other documents of reference easily accessible, had spent weeks if not months in collecting and combining the material for this supreme effort, in which he has ingeniously contrived to include only whatever seemed to support his contentions and to exclude everything that would not harmonize with them, I do not think that the time granted me was excessive. And even now I feel that had I the same opportunities which he enjoys, and denies to all others, perhaps I might be able more briefly if not more conclusively to expose his unfairness, correct his misrepresentations, and refute his fallacious arguments and inferences.

I confess that I came to listen to Mr. Rantoul not wholly unprepared to be personally *roasted*, to some extent. During the last summer, — I should say not long after my attention had been first called to Mr. Putnam's refutation of the statements and arguments upon which the claim to genuineness of the supposed relic of the First Meeting-house in Salem is founded, — I had an intimation that I might expect something of the kind sooner or later. A quiet, modest young man called upon me at my house (presenting his card as the reporter of a local paper) with reference to my authorization of the printed signature to two reports, which, for more than twenty years past, Mr. Rantoul has been industriously publishing as undoubtedly authentic, without taking the pains to consult me. I advised the young man to ask Mr. Rantoul to show him the paper or papers purporting to

bear my signature, and when he should have reported to me that he had seen such a paper it would be soon enough for me to engage in a controversy into which, evidently, Mr. Rantoul was bent upon dragging me or my name. I added that Mr. Rantoul's purpose could be of no beneficial service to the Institute or to the public, who, if interested at all, were probably more desirous to know whether Mr. Putnam's views of the invalidity of the claims made for the supposed relic were sound or otherwise, than to discuss the question whether or not I had signed the committee's reports, or, for some reason or no reason, in the course of forty years, had changed my mind. Some one sent me a cutting from the "Salem Evening News" of Sept. 12, 1899, in which Mr. F. C. Damon printed a letter, written by him to Mr. Rantoul on the eighteenth of August last, wherein he charges the latter with taking the position, "with our Mr. Farrell," — meaning the reporter to whom I have alluded, — that he "did not propose to furnish any ammunition for Mr. Goodell." This letter was replied to by Mr. Rantoul on the next day in a letter in which he refers to the reports I have mentioned, in the following language : —

"To suppose that these two reports were dishonestly, or carelessly, or ignorantly made up or that they have been tampered with in the printing, is to impugn the credit and intelligence of those immediately concerned. *Of this group Mr. Goodell is the last survivor. For a series of years he was, from 1861, chairman of the Publication Committee and became vice-president of the Historical Department the next year. No one was in a better position to know if anything irregular or questionable was done or anything omitted, upon which the verdict of those investigators can be set aside. I think you will agree with me that the time to search the archives of the Institute has not yet arrived.*"

It is important to observe that neither in this letter nor in that of Mr. Damon to which it replies are any "investigators" mentioned as such.

Still later, on August twenty-second, Mr. Rantoul continues his reference to me in this style : —

"If Mr. Goodell has, for any reason, as you say he has, been led to question the genuineness of the old meeting-house, — if in any way he has been brought to think that it is another meeting-house than the one we suppose it to be, — you need no help from me in stating his position. You naturally

look to him for that. But the claim that, forty years ago, he was not in harmony with the committee, and was not as fully responsible for the results they put before the public as any one of them, *is a new one*, and I doubt your authority for it. If that is what you are taking pains to probe, I think The News will find itself beating the air or fighting a straw man. The moment evidence is produced on that point I think you will find Mr. Goodell promptly denying that he has ever made such a claim.

"If you will put me, at any time, in possession of a statement, signed or authorized by Mr. Goodell, to the effect that he was not as fully as any member of the investigating committee responsible for the two reports made by them in April, 1860, and in June, 1865, and published over his name, I will then write you further."

Thus he impliedly reaffirms the declaration he made in his address May 15, 1889, that inasmuch as, for forty years past, —

"nobody has come forward . . . either to discredit the facts these local antiquaries thought they had established, or to refute the reasoning on which they rested their deductions, or to produce new facts, not known to them, which ought to impair the value of their results, I suppose the question of authenticity *must now be considered closed*, so far as such a question can be."

Now, since, so far as I know, it had never been intimated, until Mr. Rantoul delivered his address in May last, that my uniform and persistent contention, from the very beginning, against the genuineness of the supposed relic was not generally understood, and since, so far as was consistent with modesty, I had maintained my position and given my reasons, at some length, at the meeting of the Institute, April 26, 1860, with the result that the committee's report was recommitted, and the matter put over to the third of May, when I was again present, ready still further to oppose the scheme of appropriating money from our scant treasury for the purpose of removing and reërecting this old frame, I felt some curiosity to know upon what foundation, of fact or imagination or fallacious deduction, Mr. Rantoul had come to a conclusion so contrary to the truth.

I will say, in passing, that I was spared further protest at the meeting of May third by the declaration that the committee was not prepared to report; and that, at the annual meeting, which was held six days later, the consideration of the committee's report was resumed in my absence, and a vote was passed thanking the committee, and further instructing them, —

"to take such action in relation to [the old frame] as they may deem advisable — provided that the funds for this purpose be obtained by private subscription, or by such appropriation from the general income of the Institute as the Finance Committee may direct."

All these proceedings were open and notorious. My protest against paying money from our treasury for this, to say the least, doubtful enterprise was so far heeded that, though not expressly ratified in the vote, it was practically operative, since not one cent of the money expended upon the old frame was contributed by the Institute, notwithstanding Mr. Rantoul's insinuation that the Institute purchased it of Mr. Nichols and paid for it through their committee.

After this vote the scheme seemed to have been virtually abandoned. Only brief and casual notices of the movement had appeared in the newspapers, with the exception of the "Observer." This paper, edited by one of the most intelligent and careful contributors to our local press, himself, at that time, first among our local antiquaries, as well as the first to take notice of the old frame, years before, not as that of a "meeting-house," but as part of an "old tavern," — which was all that appears to have been then claimed for it, — received the report with due respect. After speaking of the supposed identification as appearing "singular and almost incredible," he continues: "We are assured that this very interesting point is established as a fixed fact — a truth of history;" and adds: "*If it is so*, then measures should be taken for the removal and preservation of this ancient edifice," etc. It is easy to read between these lines that this circumspect writer and antiquary received the report with due allowance for the possibility of error.

After the momentary excitement of novelty had subsided, the project, as I have intimated, fell flat; and it remained dormant for more than three years. Of its resuscitation I shall speak more particularly further on, when I come to consider Mr. George Atkinson Ward's participation in the business of removing and reërecting the frame.

I think I have adduced reasons enough for feeling called upon to set Mr. Rantoul right in one respect at least. I directly and unequivocally impugn his statements in the public press, and

in his address of May fifteenth, that for forty years nobody has come forward to discredit the facts relied upon by the committee or to refute their reasoning, and that the claim that I "was not in harmony with the committee forty years ago, and was not as fully responsible for the results they put before the public, *is a new one.*" Indeed, it is a pretty hard strain upon the charity with which every gentleman is bound to regard the acts and motives of another, to be willing to attribute such a statement respecting notorious facts that were clearly within Mr. Rantoul's cognizance at the time, to mistake or forgetfulness.

I may add that Dr. Wheatland was not convinced of the genuineness of the so-called relic, although he, according to his invariable practice, neither opposed the arguments nor interposed obstacles to the schemes of others, so long as they not only contemplated no considerable expense to the Institute, but, as in this case, had in view the increase of space for the storing of the old furniture with which our apartments in Plummer Hall were overcrowded. No opponent of the committees' reports was more strenuous than was the late Caleb Buffum, who accompanied me to the Institute on one occasion to talk the matter over with Dr. Wheatland, his boyhood companion; and the colloquy between the two was as spicy as it was entertaining — Buffum complaining of the Doctor's connivance at what he called "a fraud" and "a humbug," and the Doctor fencing, but in such a way that it was evident he deemed it not worth while to "make a fuss" over a small matter that, after all, if it did not result in giving us an undoubted historic relic, afforded us a nearly fireproof shelter for other memorials of antiquity, the genuineness of which was established by documentary evidence. The Doctor, moreover, declined to assume the office of censor of the opinions of others, who *might* be right for aught that he positively *knew* to the contrary. Again, on this head, while Mr. Rantoul repeats the assertion that for forty years no impeachment of the committee's report has been attempted, let me call your attention to his declaration in his late address to this Board, made, apparently, in utter disregard for consistency, "that there have always been dissenters from the views" the committees expressed.

Indeed! and he might as well have specified who those

dissenters were, or some of them, and how and when they manifested their dissent. I have named some for him to begin with, and I can furnish more if he wishes to extend the list. And let me impress it upon him that if he would have the list complete, he diligently inquire into the origin of the opposition, so as not to omit the name of him who began it, and who bore the transient obloquy which it provoked, but whom Mr. Rantoul, as the pretended champion of the Institute, now seems to consider somehow responsible for a recent "attack" upon something or somebody, — he does not indicate whom or what, except as any one may choose to construe the phrase "attack upon the authenticity of the First Meeting-house." But of this I shall say more when I come to give the details of my own connection with the work of introducing this old building to public notice.

Let me now proceed directly to consider Mr. Rantoul's paper — only premising that the "attack" to which he refers in the first paragraph was an article in the "Boston Evening Transcript" of July 26, 1899, by Mr. Eben Putnam, — substantially, I presume, the same as printed in "Putnam's Historical Magazine" for August, 1899, edited and published at Danvers by the same Mr. Putnam, and of which, by his courtesy, each member of this Board, through the President, received a copy at our October meeting. Upon this so-called "attack" I may as well here as elsewhere offer some comment. Doubtless all of you have read this brochure, which is entitled "An Inquiry into the Authenticity of the So-called First Meeting House preserved by the Essex Institute at Salem, Mass." If so, I think most of you will agree with me that it is a very able presentation of the facts and arguments against the conclusions of the committee of 1860, and against whatever reënforcement or addition that report received from the committee of 1865 and from the author of "The Story of the Meeting House," printed in 1897. No previous essay upon either side of the controversy begins to compare with it in discriminating fulness of detail, clearness and acuteness of perception, exactness of quotation, fairness and perspicuity of statement, and cogency of argument. I do not remember to have ever read a controversial pamphlet freer from bitterness and partisan ebullition; yet Mr. Rantoul calls it an "attack," and

denounces it as “virulent,” a word which is authoritatively defined as “*very poisonous or venomous ; bitter in enmity ; malignant ; active in doing injury.*”

I confess my amazement at this charge from one whose position demands the exercise of the utmost urbanity towards his juniors and a constant purpose to overlook their failings.

I have discovered but one word in the pamphlet that is susceptible of an offensive meaning ; and that is the word “*Imposture,*” with which Mr. Putnam heads his description of the efforts that have been made by the committees and others, by mere assumption, based on misrepresentation of the record, to force the little structure on Gallows Hill, which he calls “this shed, outhouse, annex to a tavern,” to tally with an ideal meeting-house, of which, he claims, there is not, and never was, any evidence of a corresponding reality. For my part, I see no impropriety in this use of the word, although I have felt, and so expressed myself to Mr. Putnam, that it was unfortunate ; not that the word was necessarily offensive, but because it admits of equivocity in its application, and so gives the captious and ill-disposed a hook upon which to hang an objection. By the rules of courtesy, as well as by the laws of judicial construction, all words should be taken, if possible, *in mitiori sensu* ; and all phrases are to be construed favorably, unless the contrary meaning is unequivocally intended.

By the application of these principles no personal reflection should be inferred from Mr. Putnam’s language, which we are bound to take — as he says he intended it — to apply to the building, which, he claims, under the circumstances, invites public regard as something that it is not ; thus imposing upon the credulity of those who have not the means of correcting this false impression. At the worst, the word as used by Mr. Putnam is a permissible metaphor by which no one need be deceived. The man who would infer from Pope’s declaration that the London Monument, —

“Like a tall bully lifts the head and lies,” —

that the column itself, or those who erected it, actually broke the ninth commandment of the Decalogue, *intentionally*, would

be worthy to take rank with the simpleton of whom Cowper sings, —

“And e’en the child that knows no better
Than to interpret by the letter
The story of a cock and bull,
Must have a most uncommon skull.”

Thus much for this word as offensively applicable to contemporary persons or things.

In Mr. Rantoul’s peroration he seems to indicate a grievance quite distinct from the one I have just described which I take from his exordium. The other I will consider presently, only turning aside here once more to say that it is possible I may have mistaken the *gravamen* of Mr. Putnam’s offence in the eyes of the President, and that it may consist in something I find given, in the brief supplement of Mr. Putnam’s pamphlet, as an example of the faulty manner in which, as he says, “research and argument concerning the First Meeting-house have been conducted.”

The example given is quoted from the anonymous contribution to the Notes and Queries in the twenty-fifth volume of the Historical Collections of the Essex Institute. Mr. Putnam convicts the writer of a gross blunder in garbling and misapplying a passage in Cudworth’s letter to Stoughton in 1634, a copy of which I procured from the Public-Record Office in London, nearly forty years ago; and which, more than thirty years ago, was printed in our Collections: — but of this the anonymous writer seems not to have been aware. By this misrepresentation of Cudworth’s meaning, the number of his little congregation of sixty worshippers in the year 1634, at Scituate, was made to apply to the very much larger congregation of Roger Williams at Salem.

This astounding muddle was made the basis of grave conjecture as to what bearing the words “sixty persons” had upon the population of Salem at that time, and whether or not Governor Endicott’s dwelling-house was the regular place of worship.

But I see nothing in Mr. Putnam’s criticism of this writer that is not fair, and pertinent to the subject in hand; and if

Mr. Rantoul's esteem for this anonymous writer has induced him, in rebuffing the critic, to charge him or his criticism with being "virulent," I think his partiality for his friend has led him beyond the bounds of civility, and that he should apologize for the excessive heat of his resentment. It is considered dishonorable on the battlefield, or even in the prize-ring, not to handsomely acknowledge the defeat of one's self or one's friend when he has been fairly overmatched by his antagonist. Having concluded this episode, I now revert to the peroration.

The change, to which I have alluded, from the complaint to which Mr. Rantoul begins his paper, appears in comparing the language in which he couches it, with the grievance set forth in the concluding sentence. The sentence runs thus: —

"The Institute will ill deserve the service of such men as have honored us in the past, if it shall ever fall upon a time when no voice is raised to resent a slur upon their memories."

The "attack upon the authenticity" of the old frame is thus suddenly changed to a "slur upon the memories" of certain persons in the past. But the President fails to make it clear whether the persons he considers slurred were the forefathers of the colony or the Fathers of Salem; and if the latter, whether the founders of the First Congregational Church and Society in Salem, or the gentlemen who were instrumental, actually or conjecturally, in reërecting the old frame.

He thus presents an aggravated form of fallacious argumentation, such as is denounced by all logicians under the general name of "fallacies of confusion," and specifically called by John Stuart Mill, the *ignoratio elenchi*, and by Archbishop Whateley, "the fallacy of irrelevant conclusion."

I cannot better express the nature of this fallacy than by adopting a sentence from "Elements of Logic" by the latter, in which he describes it thus: —

"Various kinds of propositions are, according to the occasion, substituted for the one of which proof is required: sometimes the particular for the universal; sometimes a proposition with different terms; and various are the contrivances employed to effect and to conceal this substitution, and to make the conclusion which the sophist has drawn, answer practically the same purpose as the one he ought to have established."

The equivocation in his last sentence is but one of the glaring instances of Mr. Rantoul's propensity to disregard the established canons of logic. We may not assume that his false reasoning is intentional, and so are forced, as the only alternative, to ascribe it to ignorance of the rules of logic, and utter inability to comprehend the true nature and force of a syllogism.

This, and other forms of fallacy in which his paper abounds, his contradictions, his jumbling of sentences, and his confusion of dates, incidents, and persons, render his essay bewildering to the intelligent reader, though well enough adapted to make, upon the ignorant and unwary, the impressions he is willing they should retain with the same vagueness in which the corresponding ideas exist confusedly jumbled in his own mind.

I ask you to follow me as I review some leading points in his paper with the purpose of comparing his statements with the actual facts, and of applying the principles of logic, which he habitually disregards, and the application of which is quite sufficient to subvert his laborious and pretentious effort.

The committee appointed on motion of the late George D. Phippen, at a field-meeting in Saugus, July 7, 1859, to which Mr. Rantoul refers, consisted of five persons only; viz., Charles Moses Endicott, Daniel Appleton White, Francis Peabody, Samuel Melancthon Worcester, and George Dean Phippen — and the committee as it stood in 1865 was not larger. Yet Mr. Rantoul repeatedly refers to the “*seven* investigators;” which can only be accounted for by the supposition either that he has a superstitious regard for this magical number, or chooses it as better adapted to effect some ulterior purpose than is either five, which was the largest number on the committee at any one time, or ten, which should be his number if he includes everybody even supposed to be, in any degree, responsible for the committees' reports according to his own theory; not omitting Mr. Huntington, — who moved the vote of thanks when Mr. Upham read his memorial address upon Mr. Peabody, which contained the encomium on the latter for his efforts to save the old frame, — and Messrs. Goodell and Patch, neither of whom was ever in any sense a member of either committee.

It may appear, as we proceed, how the magical number better

subverted Mr. Rantoul's purpose than the decimal, although I do not think it necessary to account for all his vagaries of ratiocination. His selection of this number as a part of his argument, however, is so near akin to the defence of Dr. Slop, in "Tristram Shandy," of the number of the sacraments, that I am tempted to quote from his colloquy with the companions who with him listened to the reading of the Parson's sermon : —

" 'Why, Sir, are there not Seven cardinal virtues ? — Seven mortal sins ? — Seven golden candlesticks ? — Seven heavens ? ' — ' 'Tis more than I know,' replied my uncle *Toby*. 'Are there not seven wonders of the world ? — Seven days of the creation ? — Seven planets ? — Seven plagues ? ' — 'That there are,' quoth my father, with much affected gravity."

The functions of this committee, and the manner in which their appointment was introduced, appear in the following extracts from the records of the Field Meeting referred to : —

"George D. Phippen, of Salem, stated as a historical item of curious interest that tradition has long held that the First Meeting-House in Salem was not pulled down after its ceasing to be used in that capacity, but was removed, about 1639, to some spot near the road to South Danvers, and employed for other purposes for some time afterward. Recently it has been asserted that the old building or its frame yet exists; that it stands on the land of Mr. David Nichols, at the foot of Gallows Hill, and is the same structure that did service for some years under the name of Tompkin's Inn. It seems desirable that the correctness of these statements be tested, and the Institute should take action on the case for that purpose, particularly as Mr. Nichols had tendered the building to the Society for their disposal. He moved that a committee be raised to inquire into the facts of the case, and to report what action the Institute ought to take in reference thereto."

The committee were nominated in the order in which I have given their names, and no change was ever made in their number or personality except by the substitution, Dec. 28, 1863, of George Atkinson Ward for Mr. Endicott, whose death had occurred two weeks before, and the appointment of Hon. Charles W. Upham, Sept. 30, 1864, to fill the place left vacant by the death of Mr. Ward on the twenty-second of the same month.

There is no intimation, either in the Secretary's records or the printed Proceedings, or elsewhere, of any other change in this committee except what may be inferred from the lists of sub-

scribers to the two reports printed, respectively, in the Historical Collections for 1860 and 1865, and which do not appear in the records of the Institute nor in any other official document. It is, therefore, needless to say that the use of the names of Goodell and Patch was wholly unauthorized.

Now let us examine the credentials of the alleged several committee-men. To begin with ; from the Board as first constituted must be struck the names of Goodell and Patch, who, as I have said, were never appointed and never served.

Next comes Judge White, whose name is not in the list of subscribers to either report, and of whom it must be said there is no evidence that he even knew of the appointment of such a committee or the existence of the old frame on David Nichols's premises. While it is true that, down to the time of his death, which occurred March 30, 1861, he had been nominally President of the Institute, it is equally true that, owing to ill health and the infirmities of age, he had not presided at any meeting since April 22, 1858. His last appearance in his official capacity was on the evening of Saturday, Sept. 8, 1860, when he introduced Professor Agassiz to the audience assembled in Mechanics Hall to witness the close of the Institute Fair. From the hearts as well as the minds of those of the survivors of the company present on that occasion, the impression can never be effaced of the devotion to duty which spurred this venerable gentleman to the physical effort of climbing the stairs and making the address, brief as it was, in which he, with tremulous voice, thanked all connected with the Fair who had generously exerted themselves in behalf of the Institute, and congratulated the audience "on the approbation and sympathy" of the eminent naturalist who had honored them with his presence.

His later years were spent in retirement ; and towards the end, what little strength remained after the performance of simple domestic and social duties he devoted to the completion of his book on New-England Congregationalism. In this work he was engaged to the last, insomuch that in his preface he authorizes the declaration that, as he approached the completion of his eighty-fifth year, he found himself so far prostrated by illness as to be compelled to entrust its preparation to friends

who could truly state his views. The preface was finished only eighteen days before his death.

This literary work was his part in a controversy with Rev. Dr. Worcester upon the subject of the nature of the original covenant of the First Church, and how far it involved a profession of faith, and whether or not any stated declaration of doctrinal belief was required. It was probably on account of their joint interest in this historical question, and because Mr. Phippen was a member of Dr. Worcester's congregation, that the latter and Judge White were both nominated upon the committee.

It is a point which Mr. Putnam has urged with force, that neither from his book nor elsewhere has a syllable been adduced to show Judge White's knowledge of the existence of this old frame or his interest in the project for its restoration. No hint of such a thing appears in the obituary sketch of him in the Proceedings; and it should be added that his pastor and biographer, Rev. George W. Briggs, who conferred with him frequently towards the close of his life, although he dwells upon the Judge's interest in, and relations to, the Institute, and his absorbing devotion to his latest literary work which I have described, does not mention the Old Meeting-house. The opinion that Judge White attached no importance to, even if he knew of, the tradition concerning the old frame is further corroborated by the record of proceedings in the Massachusetts Historical Society, of which he was for so long a valued and loyal member. At a meeting of that Society, in August, 1860, Dr. Holmes, who had been recently in Salem, gave an account of a visit, probably in company with his brother-in-law, Mr. Upham, to an old house on "Witch Hill," to use his own words, built, according to tradition, of timber originally used in the frame of the first house of public worship erected at Salem. He also exhibited fragments of the clay-and-straw plastering of the building. The report of Dr. Holmes's account appeared in the printed serial of the Society, accessible to all members. A little more than two years later Rev. Dr. James Walker prepared for the Proceedings a memorial of Judge White, very carefully compiled from personal memoranda, including the Judge's diary and correspondence. In this memoir, filling nearly seventy

octavo pages, there is not the slightest intimation that the Judge, who, confessedly, was deeply interested not only in the original covenant, but in everything else relating to the history of the First Church, had ever heard of the old structure, or that he, or his biographer, attached any importance to the rumor, which had so quickly subsided, concerning the discovery of the frame of the original meeting-house. Dr. Walker, though considerably younger than Judge White, was his intimate friend, and a man of profound and accurate knowledge of the early history of New England, who, for his eminent attainments, had been, through a period of nearly seven years, president of Harvard College. I find, in the index, references to his name in connection with the Society to more than forty pages of the Proceedings, exclusive of posthumous mention; so that it is not likely that he could have been ignorant of the discussion, either before the Society or in Salem, of a topic so interesting as the discovery of the first house of worship in Massachusetts, which had sheltered the Church whose covenant his friend had so recently and lovingly expounded.

Before we proceed to consider the part taken by another member of this committee let us again revert to Mr. Rantoul's peroration, the implied censures in which he pretends to utter in deference to the opinion and with the sanction of Judge White. If not intended to rebuke a "slur" on our forefathers these strictures apply, if they are applicable to anything, to an alleged "virulent attack," not only upon Judge White, but upon all others who were in a similar category.

But what application would Mr. Rantoul have us make, in this controversy respecting the frame of David Nichols's old building, of Judge White's observation concerning the obligation to protect the good name of the Fathers of Salem? Are we to regard the Judge's words as a reproof of those who now doubt, or at any former time have doubted, the identity of this old frame with the whole or any portion of the First Meeting-house — as if, by their incredulity, these doubters had slurred the memory of the pious Founders of the Plantation? Or must we deem them a rebuke of the temerity of those who have dared to question the infallibility of the committee?

It seems like wasting words to argue that the Judge had only in mind the immigrant Founders of Salem and their associates. Referring to a remark made by John Quincy Adams in 1843, in his discourse before the Massachusetts Historical Society on the New England Confederacy of 1643, uttered in vindication of the reputation of our forefathers from the slanders of their contemporaries, which had been kept alive by tradition, Judge White pleaded for the same protection of the good name of the "Fathers of Salem."

Now, had any one professed to believe that Nichols's barn was a part of the old Quaker meeting-house, or a cow-shed, or had gone so far as to declare that it was only fit to be cut up into kindling-wood, how could his opinion be construed as a reflection upon the good name either of those who erected the First Meeting-house or of those who worshipped in it? Even if the frame were actually composed of materials that once formed a part of the structure in which Higginson, Skelton, and Roger Williams officiated, where is the logical connection between these old timbers and the piety and integrity of those Puritan preachers or of the members of their flock? Mr. Rantoul's connecting the "Fathers of Salem," as intended by Judge White, with the men who, in the service of the Institute, "have honored us in the past," — which, though obscurely stated, I am charitably willing to suppose to be his meaning, — is unintelligible except as bait to gudgeons. Does Mr. Rantoul write in this equivocal manner because he knows there are people who are capable of being stirred into passion by meaningless phrases and sounding words — *ad captandum vulgus*? Is Mr. Rantoul acting upon his knowledge of this peculiarity of the human mind, or are we to suppose that he really believes this ineffable twaddle to be the height of wisdom?

Evidently he is not satisfied to pose solely as the vindicator of the forefathers, for fear that his labor may appear too far-fetched, and so, apparently for this reason, and at the same time in order to avail himself of the supposed irresistible authority of great names, he eulogizes certain leading members of the committee who have been distinguished in public life. Judge White, whose name, be it remembered, is not affixed to either

report, and whom Mr. Rantoul wantonly drags into this miserable wrangle, comes in for his share of laudation, at the conclusion of which, with an air of lofty indignation, Mr. Rantoul declares that the Judge "would cut off his right hand before he would have lent himself, even by silent connivance, to any course which would have imposed a sham upon the Institute or help the Institute to impose a sham upon the world," and then proceeds to mix him up in the muddle of his peroration, apparently for the purpose of making the bait I have mentioned more enticing.

Now since, as I have shown, Judge White never served on the committee, nor, even, probably knew anything about the old barn on Nichols's premises, and had been in his grave nearly or quite three years when the old frame was transferred from the rear of Boston street to the rear of Plummer Hall, the danger of his suffering the amputation of his right hand for complicity in the business was hardly worth mentioning.

Since we are not to accuse Mr. Rantoul of intentional duplicity, how can we avoid charging him with dense stupidity in his apprehension of the relations of facts, and with absolute fatuity in the art of reasoning?

Mr. Huntington comes next to be regarded. Although he also did not sign either report, I presume he is one of Mr. Rantoul's "seven investigators." His active connection with the Institute began after his election as President at the annual meeting in May, 1861, — at which Mr. James Upson, Vice-President, was in the chair, — and it ended with his retirement, May 10, 1865, — not in 1862, as Mr. Rantoul states with his usual inaccuracy: so that he was not in office when either of the reports of the committee was presented and acted upon: neither have I seen any evidence, nor do I believe, that he ever read either of these reports, much less that he had any part in framing them. Yet Mr. Rantoul proceeds to picture in glowing colors his career at the bar and as clerk of the courts, premising his eulogy as follows: —

"Fortunately for the truth this question [that is, the contention about Mr. Nichols's old barn] has been raised while there are many living able to bear witness to his [Mr. Huntington's] sturdy virtues." In another place he couples him with Mr. Upham as having been chosen to the mayoralty of the city;

and notices the fact that at the close of the memorial address upon his successor (after Mr. Huntington had retired from the presidency) he expressed "the grateful appreciation by the audience" of the great interest and value of the address, and moved its reference to the appropriate committee for publication : which motion I seconded. In this address Mr. Upham, who gave it, and who was a thorough believer in the genuineness of the supposed "relic" behind Plummer Hall, was warm in his expressions of appreciation of Mr. Peabody's efforts for its preservation. This — and the opportunity it afforded him to "get in" what, in his simplicity, he seems to think is a crushing blow at me, as convicting me of duplicity, because, as vice-president, I deemed it an act of courtesy to second Mr. Huntington's motion — is, I suppose, why Mr. Rantoul has taken the pains to quote so largely from Mr. Upham's address, and to refer to the complimentary motion.

But note the syllogism in this wonderful argumentation : —

The major premise : That Mr. Huntington was ever interested in the inquiry about the identity of the so-called relic is only inferred from his making a motion expressing appreciation of an address by Mr. Upham before the Institute of which Mr. Huntington had formerly been president, in which address the author professes his belief in the relic, and praises Mr. Peabody for his efforts to preserve it.

N.B. — He made the motion because he believed in the relic. He believed in the relic because he made the motion. This is both *petitio principii* and arguing in a circle.

The minor premise : Mr. Huntington was a prominent member of the Essex Bar, district attorney for several years, and clerk of the courts to the time of his death. *He had also been mayor of Salem.*

The conclusion : ERGO, the genuineness of the relic is established, and all further debate upon it precluded ; and doubting its identity with a building not known to have been in existence for two hundred years, — but assumed to be of certain dimensions because those dimensions appear in the supposed relic, — and calling the latter an imposture, is a virulent attack on its authenticity.

Shade of Aristotle ! Is this an emanation from a historical and scientific society in the nineteenth century, or from an insane asylum, or school for the feeble-minded ?

One unfamiliar with Mr. Rantoul's peculiarities might naturally inquire, why, when he was grandiloquently recounting the achievements and virtues of Judge White and Mr. Huntington, and the public positions held by them, and others whom I am yet to consider, he studiously omitted to mention the Rev. Dr. Worcester, who *was* elected a member of the first committee ? Surely, he was better entitled to notice, one would think, than others *not* of the committee. Though not a native of Salem he had resided here from so tender an age, that he could remember no earlier home. For some years professor of rhetoric and oratory at Amherst College, he succeeded his father as pastor of the Tabernacle church and congregation — an office which had been held by father and son, with an intermission of about twelve years, from 1803. As for the fame of the old edifice in which they ministered, modelled after, and named for, Whitefield's famous chapel in London, and framed from the masts and spars of vessels of Revolutionary fame, I doubt if we have any other structure which, in future years, will have so wide a reputation or that is more likely to redound to the glory of Salem. Eighty-two years ago, four pioneer Christian missionaries were ordained within its walls, and the event celebrated by the solemn communion of five hundred church-members at the sacramental table. Since that day hundreds of devoted men and women, under the patronage of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, have gone forth to heathen lands to proclaim the Christian evangel ; until now, in the verse of good Bishop Heber, attuned to the lively measures of the old sailors' song, "'Twas while the seas were roaring," is sung in a hundred dialects, all over the world, the glorious realization of the prophetic resolve to persevere, —

"Till earth's remotest nation has learned Messiah's name."

However we may dissent from the specific doctrines which they went forth to promulgate, who will have the hardihood to deny that this great work, to which both the Worcesters, father

and son, were all their lives devoted, is not one of the grandest exhibitions of exalted altruism that the world has ever seen?

I predict, although none of this generation may witness it, that pilgrims of all races and tongues from the East and the West and the Islands of the Sea will come to view the spot where was inaugurated the movement which lifted their benighted ancestors into the light and joy of Christian civilization.

Why, then, was Dr. Worcester forgotten? It could not be because his religious views antagonized those of the Fathers, and thus "slurred their memories," for he held strictly to the primitive doctrines from which the brethren of the First Church had receded — the doctrines which, announced by Calvin, and traced through Augustine to St. Paul, had been received by the great Puritan Assembly at Westminster, in the words of St. Jude, as "the faith which was once delivered unto the Saints." The profession of faith of this Assembly of Divines, incorporated in their "Shorter Catechism," and bound up with the Cambridge platform of discipline, was the rock upon which the present Tabernacle Church was founded.

Moreover, Dr. Worcester had contributed quite as much to the preservation and exaltation of the "relic" as had either his theological antagonist Judge White, or his parishioner Major Huntington — which was, *nothing at all*. I can discover in Mr. Rantoul's eulogies of these gentlemen no other peculiar merit entitling them to preference except that they were both members of the Essex Bar and that the latter had been "mayor of Salem;" — both of which qualifications Mr. Rantoul also possesses.

Not to anticipate what I have to say specially of Mr. Upham, I will take this opportunity to observe that his having been "mayor of the city" is particularly enumerated among his qualifications for pronouncing, *ex cathedra*, on the historical questions involved in ascertaining the relation which Mr. Nichols's old barn bore to the First Meeting-house. To this I may as well reply, once for all, that I cannot see that his assumption is indubitable. If we look back through sixty years of our municipal history we have abundant proof that it is possible for a small politician to be foisted into the mayoralty by his heelers and

retainers looking for a job, or for the crumbs that fall from the municipal table. Their candidate may have masqueraded in the City Hall as preëminently the Father of the City, blocking every enterprise for the city's improvement, and squandering the people's money, and, after all, show himself such an ass as to be unable to perceive or state accurately facts of common observation, or to reason consecutively.

Having thus excluded Messrs. Patch and Goodell, who were *not* of the original committee of five, and Messrs. White and Worcester, who *were*, there remain only three responsible members: Messrs. Endicott, Peabody, and Phippen; but as there is reason to believe that Mr. Upham, — who was not appointed upon the committee until Sept. 30, 1864, when he succeeded Mr. Ward, who, in turn, had taken the place of Mr. Endicott, — had been in communication with the committee from the first, it is only fair to allow Mr. Rantoul the benefit of four of these "investigators." It is certain, however, that at no time after 1863 were there more than these four serving on the committee; namely, Messrs. Peabody, Phippen, Ward, and Upham; and that, before that date, there was the same number, — Mr. Endicott holding the place filled, later, by Mr. Ward. No one except the mechanics employed in taking down, removing, and reërecting the building, is known to have been admitted to their counsels; no one else appears to have been a party to their negotiations with Mr. Nichols; and no one else contributed to the expense of the undertaking. Yet Mr. Rantoul persistently ascribes this whole business to the mysterious "seven investigators," and, in face of the declarations of Mr. Phippen, at Saugus, in 1859, that Mr. Nichols "*had tendered the building to the Society, for their disposal;*" and of Mr. Upham, which he has quoted, that "*Mr. Nichols presented the building,*" that Colonel Peabody "*offered to assume the entire expense of the operation of removal and reconstruction,*" and that "*the building may well be regarded as his monument;*" and Mr. Ward's declaration in 1863, that, "*by the munificence of one of our members it will soon be placed in the grounds of Plummer Hall;*" — he repeats the statement that the committee, or the mystical "seven," — it is hard to determine which, even if he recognizes any distinction, "*bought the frame*

and removed it at their own expense," and that "we," meaning, I suppose, the Institute, "*had acquired the frame in May, 1864, from David Nichols!*"

In his jumping from *four* to *seven* he rivals Sir John Falstaff in the dialogue in which he asseverates to Prince Henry, —

"These four came all a-front, and mainly thrust at me. I made me no more ado, but took all their seven points in my target, thus.

Prince Henry. Seven? Why, there were but four, even now.

Falstaff. Seven, by these hilts, or I am a villain else.

Prince Henry. Pr'ythee, let him alone; we shall have more anon."

The first group of four to which the number of "investigators" has been thus reduced, or, perhaps, I should say, of *three*, — since Mr. Phippen, — whom Mr. Rantoul ignores, — being the successor of Mr. Endicott as cashier of a bank in which Mr. Peabody was interested, may be counted with the latter as *one*, on the presumption that, from their relations, and their probably frequent interchange of views, they came to agree, substantially, — were practically united in their sentiments. It cannot be denied that they enthusiastically concurred in the opinion that the old frame was a part of the Old Meeting-house. Their faith, as well as that of Mr. Ward, was so strong that they gave little or no heed to the difficulties, improbabilities, and seeming impossibilities which deterred others from readily acceding to their conclusions.

Mr. Upham, the youngest of these, was a man of learning, of brilliant parts, and fertile imagination. He had been pastor of the First Church for twenty years, from 1824, either as colleague of Rev. Dr. Prince, or alone; and then retired on account of the loss of his voice. Subsequently, at different times, he edited the "Christian Review" and the "Christian Register" — the latter in 1845-6. Four years before he gave up preaching he had got a taste of political life, to which he was decidedly inclined, by serving one year in the House of Representatives, and after this, at six different times through a period of eleven years, he was a member of one or the other branch of the State Legislature; and in 1857 and 1858 he had served as president of the Senate. From 1853 to 1855 he had been a member of Congress, and in the former year also a delegate to the Constitutional Convention

of Massachusetts. We must not omit to repeat what, in Mr. Rantoul's judgment, appears to have been very important evidence of his ability, that in 1852 he was mayor of Salem. Though not a native of this State he was descended from the best Massachusetts stock, and was a most thorough-going republican. He not only detested the shams of hereditary aristocracy, but was an ardent admirer of the great heroes of the Puritan Commonwealths of England, — Old and New.

As might naturally be expected, therefore, we find him the biographer of Hugh Peters, the regicide and one of his predecessors in the pulpit of the First Church. He was also a charming delineator of many other characters and events in the history of the old town of which the First Church was the centre. His "History of the Salem Witchcraft" is conceded to be the fullest and most instructive treatment of that subject which has yet appeared. As a writer and thinker, however, he excelled in polemics rather than in exact narrative; and a critical observer cannot fail to notice that in his "History" his exuberant fancy is apt to lead him astray except when checked by the conservative, careful, and thoroughly conscientious guidance of his accomplished but too modest son, to whom our city and State are so much indebted for sound expositions of our earliest history. I make this criticism not to impeach Mr. Upham's sincerity, for there never was a writer more anxious to discover and reveal the truth of history; and it is wholly or chiefly in his interpretation and coloring of indisputable facts that he invites dissent; and then always with such evident willingness to be corrected in any error as sometimes to do himself injustice. For instance, in his memorable "Reply" — an essay which may be ranked among the finest specimens of polemical writing in the English language — to the strictures which Poole had made in the "North American Review" on his history of the witchcraft, Mr. Upham voluntarily points out a supposed erroneous statement in his own book which he believed had been overlooked by his critic; whereas, in point of fact, he had been entirely right — his later construction being based upon a wrong conjecture as to the purport of a signature, made by one person in his own name for another who was the ostensible author.

Mr. Upham's conciliatory disposition, inclining him to acquiesce in the opinions of others with ardor when those opinions coincide with ideas formed in his vivid imagination, and the ease with which he habitually brushed aside prosy details that seemed to conflict with those ideas, and his tendency to look for, and to magnify the importance of, the slightest corroborating circumstances ; above all, his unsuspecting, though not unguarded, credulity in regard to all matters which seemed to confirm his preconceptions founded on enthusiastic study of the past — better fitted him for an advocate than a judge on the question which his companions were considering, and on which they were equally influenced by predilection and imagination.

Colonel Peabody was about one year older than Mr. Upham, and, undoubtedly, as was probably the case with Major Huntington, had not spent an hour of his life in original historical research, or in the critical comparison of historical data ; but as one of the so-called "investigators," he filled a place for which he was better fitted. From early manhood he had interested himself in various branches of natural philosophy, in either of which, had he been pressed by necessity, he could unquestionably have achieved eminence. In chemistry, electricity, optics — and in mechanics as applied to the utilizing of wind-power ; to improvements in the organ and in machinery for the spinning and weaving of jute, etc., he labored assiduously ; and employed skilled assistants, who found in him a generous patron. While other sons of wealthy merchants were spending their income in luxury or amusement, he was casting about for some way of enlarging the list and ensuring the excellence of the manufactures of Salem ; and to him we are indebted for the manufacture of white lead, for the purity of which Salem has long had an enviable reputation. But the accomplishment which seemed best to fit him for a place among the "investigators" was his taste for, and his knowledge of, architecture. To him, therefore, we may believe, was left the demonstration of the internal evidence which Mr. Nichols's barn presented of correspondence with the ideal which his companions imagined, or formed from their researches in ancient records and the literature of the past, regarding the actual proportions of the Old Meeting-house. I

have seen no evidence that he ever undertook to defend the "authenticity" of the relic upon any other ground. I think there can be no doubt that he relied wholly upon his kinsman, Mr. Endicott, and his much-respected friend, Mr. Upham, for his first favorable impressions, and was finally carried away by the irresistible enthusiasm of his old-time companion, Ward, after the latter had taken a hand in the restoration, upon his return to Salem.

Endicott and Ward are characters pleasant to remember. Born the same year (1703) they were in their early manhood when the "Wizard of the North," having baffled the British *possesseur* as to his identity, had, by the force of his genius, attracted the attention of the English-speaking world as "The Great Unknown," "Sir Tinsam," "The Lay of the Last Minstrel," "Marmion," "The Lady of the Lake," "The Vision of Don Roderick," and "Rokeby" had appeared, at not long intervals, in the course of ten years following his earlier works which had given promise of his future fame. Then, in more rapid order, came "Waverley," "Guy Mannering," "Tales of my Landlord," "Rob Roy," and "Ivanhoe," and forty other dazzling emanations from his fertile brain. The aspiring youth of two continents bowed to the wand of the "Wizard," and from his enchanting pages drank in the spirit of chivalry which forever spoiled them for appreciating the dignity, simplicity, and veracity of the passionless Muse of History. With them it was *esse est agnoscere pro sapientia*; and they never dreamed of spoiling the glamour which the "Wizard" threw over the lousy beggars who shared the fortunes of Rob Roy MacGregor, by stripping them of their kilts, nor of doubting the fragrant purity of dainty and haughty mistresses of mediæval knights and trochadours, whom they judged by the ideals he created.

To him to these men, of Salem lineage—who thus looked upon the far distant past as a sort of dreamland—that a veritable relic of the time of Governor Endicott was unpretentiously doing duty as a hennery or cowhouse on the premises of a descendant of heretical Quakers, was like whispering to a knight-errant that a fair lady of noble birth was immured in a "dungeon keep," or locked up in a castle tower and guarded by a dragon.

The attempt to disabuse these chivalrous gentlemen of their prepossessions would have been as vain as to try to persuade Don Quixote that his Dulcinea del Toboso was only the country wench Aldonza Lorenzo, and not Dulcinea of the illustrious family de la Mancha.

And so it was that, after my last protest in 1864, to which I shall refer again, Mr. Ward, the genial, generous lover of his Puritan ancestry and his ancestral Salem, walking up Essex street on his way home from the Institute, broke out in reproaches of my conduct in refusing to approve the committee's report. I did not hear him, but there are those living who did. Dear soul! I most heartily forgive his honest indignation, for the sake of his appreciation of so much that was good and worthy of perpetual remembrance, and for his attachment to this old town, the home and sepulchre of his forefathers.

Mr. Endicott was of the same temperament as his associate, Ward. He, however, had had a more varied experience of life, and had endured greater vicissitudes. On the sea, as a navigator, he had encountered the hurricane and the burning blaze of tropic calms. On the coasts of Sumatra, which he faithfully charted for the guidance of other navigators, he had successfully braved the relentless fury of Malay pirates and formed lifelong friendships with Indian merchants and rajahs, and, in his mature age, having achieved the highest meed of a seafaring life, he had retired to the quiet of the banking-house.

Descended from, and bearing the surname of, the governor of the old plantation of Naumkeag, he, and Ward — who was descended from Capt. George Curwen, first in the long line of Salem's merchant princes, and whose face, still looking grimly from the canvas dimmed by the deepening shadows of two centuries, bears a marked resemblance to the more genial countenance of his descendant, — had many traits in common. Allied to leading families of Essex County and "The Bay," and inquisitive as to the past, both yielded to the temptation to write much concerning the genealogies of Salem families and the traditions of the town; and doubtless in their wanderings both had dragged "at each remove a lengthening chain," as did Goldsmith's Traveller in his roving from his loved Auburn. Yet

Ward, too apt to rely upon his memory, sometimes made mistakes which were unpardonable in a professed writer of history. Of one of these Mr. Rantoul, I remember, once convicted him, but made another, equally bad, in the attempt. Mr. Endicott has fastened still another myth upon us, in his description of the "Old Planter's House," which has continued so long as to have become inveterate; so that we, I fear, have reason to apprehend another explosion when some fastidious stickler for truth shall seriously take the Institute to task for its seeming approval of this misnomer of the dwelling-house, not brought from Cape Ann, but, "about 1675," built and occupied by Daniel Epes — Salem's first famous schoolmaster.

I think I have said enough to caution you not to regard the mere opinions of either of these "investigators," as conclusive of the facts, and as sufficient justification of Mr. Rantoul's supposition that they preclude all further investigation. Even he, after all his show of indignation at the "slur" cast upon these men, or upon *somebody* or *something* else, by simply pointing out their misstatements of fact and refuting their arguments, devotes the last four or five pages of the type-written copy of his address to an argument, in his own peculiar style, to be either substituted for, or to serve as a supplement to, theirs. I fail, however, to see that he has bettered the case by this effort. He has not even offered an acceptable apology for attempting to do what he declared, as long ago as last May, had already been so sufficiently done by his seven "investigators" that "*the question of authenticity must now be considered closed so far as such a question can be.*"

I aver that the charge that there was any conscious misrepresentation in the reports, was never made or insinuated. No suspicion of such a thing was ever entertained by anybody. It is entirely without foundation; and unworthy to be credited, much less published, by any fair-minded person of ordinary intelligence. Having yielded to the dominant idea of the genuineness of the "relic," these gentlemen readily discovered satisfactory explanations of all incongruities, and a pretext for taking such liberties, in reërecting the frame, as they deemed necessary to bring it to its original form and dimensions. Having concluded,

— erroneously as I contend, — that the twelve feet given as the *length* of the chimney was the measure of its *height*, they made the posts and studding conform to this measurement, on the supposition that enough had rotted off from the foot of each to demand this addition. Hence they made the splicings concerning which, in their second report, the “committee” naïvely say “the wooden posts, *so far as they remain to us, have been extended to meet the sills by the addition of timber.*” All this is perfectly consistent with honesty, in minds unconsciously influenced by an invincible dominant idea.

So far from being willing to connive at a fraud, — so sincere were these gentlemen in their professions of belief in the genuineness of the “relic,” and so confident of the ultimate approval of the whole community, that I have no doubt either of them would have seen no incongruity in maintaining their ground with vigor and at the same time most heartily subscribing to the notable words of Mr. Upham, in his prefatory note to his “Reply” to Poole, already mentioned that, “*the spirited discussion, by earnest scholars, of special questions, although occasionally assuming the aspect of controversy, will be not only tolerated but welcomed by liberal minds.*” These are words worthy to be blazoned in letters of gold upon the walls of every historical society deserving the name. Yet how different from the narrow, bitter spirit which would crush, by an arbitrary closure, a young and promising student of history, for taking the liberty to dissent from what he deemed an egregious error to which the Society that he had justly regarded with something like filial pride and reverence stood injudiciously committed!

Now, having led you along to a critical period in the history of the committee of investigation, and described its personnel, as faithfully as I am able to at this distance of time — in doing which I have reduced Mr. Rantoul’s magical number of *seven*, to *four*, at most — and, having shown that if Mr. Rantoul includes *all* the persons he has indicated as having had to do with the committee’s business, he should make the number *ten*, I take the liberty to call his attention to a famous precedent for his juggling with numbers, less likely to disturb his smug complacency

than the comparison with the rude self-contradiction of Sir John Falstaff. It is this: In a note to the account in Plutarch's *Morals*, given by Diocles to Nicharchus, of the Banquet of the "Seven Wise Men," the very learned Professor Goodwin of Harvard, shows, from the text, that Plutarch counted Anarcharsis among the Seven, and left out Periander, who gave the feast. But for the sagacity of this American scholar we might never have known how possible it is, even for the wisest, to make such an error of computation, and in so plausible a manner as that it should have misled the world from the time the Sage of Chæroneia first published his comparison of the heroes of Greece and Rome, if not from the days of Solon. And the precedent is made still more striking by the testimony of Diocles that there were not merely seven at that feast, but more than double the number; which is a surplus greater, by four at least, than the enumeration which Mr. Rantoul makes, and forgets, of persons concerned in the doings of the "committee."

Mr. Rantoul begins his respects to me in connection with Judge White and Mr. Huntington, by calling me "the third member of the Essex Bar, on the committee."

Bear in mind that he has not shown that either of the three *served* upon the committee, or had any voice or part in its doings, or that Mr. Huntington or I was a member, save what he infers from the circumstance that my name, ostensibly in that capacity, is affixed to the two printed reports.

Of myself, though a topic the discussion of which I never approach without extreme reluctance, I am thus constrained to say something.

Since I appear to be the central figure in the target against which Mr. Rantoul, with more or less directness shoots his arrows, I am, in a manner, compelled to accept his implied challenge or invitation, where, besides the reference to me above mentioned, he in two other places, respectively, refers to me as "*the last survivor*" of his "group" of "investigators," and says that "he" [meaning me] "is still able to speak for himself." It gratifies me to have an opportunity to accept his invitation to demonstrate that possibly there is *one* thing upon which we *do not disagree*, although the proof of this may not be so agreeable to him.

Mr. Rantoul informs the public that I am "a native of Salem," and that in 1860 I was "*an attendant of the First Church,*" younger than my two companions of the Bar, "*and [on these accounts presumably] perhaps more likely to be swept away by the enthusiasm of the moment than either of his [meaning my] elders.*"

This is a fine illustration of the manner in which Mr. Rantoul invents facts and makes erroneous deductions. As to the place of my nativity, it is hardly reasonable to suppose that Mr. Rantoul possesses such superior means of information as to be able to invalidate my own recollection, and disprove the tradition in my family, that I was born in Cambridgeport, and came to Salem in 1837. As for my own testimony, although corroborated by events which I undoubtedly remember, I state it with diffidence, since, although present at the time, and perhaps the most important person in the bed-chamber, I was too young to receive any distinct impression of the year, the month, and the day of an occurrence of which, concededly, the midwife is a better witness. I remember, however, that some forty-five years ago, in a cause before a judge so infamously grotesque in his rulings that the old Court of Common Pleas, it is said, was abolished to get rid of him, I was not allowed to ask a witness her age, for the reason that she was incompetent and her testimony inadmissible; and that when I carried up my exceptions to the Supreme Judicial Court this decision was incontinently overruled. Since that time, as had previously been the rule in other judicatories, the testimony of a person as to the time and place of his birth has been considered competent in law, in this Commonwealth, at least.

It is true, as Mr. Rantoul says, that, in 1860, I was an attendant on public worship at the First Church, and a pretty regular one, I admit; but on looking at the date of the deed of my pew, I find it Sept. 17, 1859; which proves to me that my connection with that Society began two months and ten days after the committee to inquire into the tradition respecting David Nichols's barn had been appointed, at a field-meeting in Saugus, and a little more than seven months before that committee made their report, on neither of which occasions was I present, and the knowledge of which first came to me long

afterward. It would seem, therefore, that my relations to the First religious congregation in Salem can hardly be considered a circumstance of any importance as affecting my conduct or predilections in regard to the supposed relic of the Old Meeting-house, or upon any other subject. Besides, it must be remembered, I repeat, that I was not a member of that committee ; nor was I cognizant of their doings and determinations until the report was brought into Plummer Hall, written out in some form, ready to be presented for action thereupon by the Institute.

I beg you not to be misled by what you may have read in the newspapers as to the date of that report. In the Salem News of October twenty-fourth you have probably read the reply of Mr. Winfield Scott Nevins, purporting to refute the declaration of Mr. Eben Putnam, that I was not an officer nor a member of any committee of the Institute at the date of the volume of its " Historical Collections " in which that report was published ; and his counter declaration, that the records of the Institute for 1861 show that I *was then* " a member and chairman of the publication committee." Now, the record referred to by Mr. Nevins does not support his contention ; for Mr. Putnam's declaration, which is literally true, related to the year 1860, while Mr. Nevins's reference is to the year 1861, a year later than the date of the rendering and publication of the report. I have always respected Mr. Nevins for his honorable character as well as for his literary ability. Indeed, I have formed a high idea of the exceptional intelligence and fairness of our Salem journalists ; particularly those who have long contributed to the Boston papers, and I would not willingly believe that either of them could be such an infamous scoundrel as *intentionally* to attempt to deceive the public by such a contemptible trick, as this substitution of one year for another, in order to confound and refute an honest antagonist. I have no doubt that when Mr. Nevins's attention is called to this, he will promptly retract his refutation of Mr. Putnam as publicly and explicitly as he made it.

As if to impress the public with the duty of giving implicit credence to newspaper reports, and thus to prepare them to swallow such a dose as I have just called attention to (and some

others, even more remarkable, upon which he relies to prove his assertions against me, which I shall expose before I conclude), Mr. Rantoul is reported, in the *News* of January second, as going out of his way, on the occasion of hanging the portrait of a historical writer, to enlogize what he calls this "ephemeral literature," in some paragraphs of fulsome twaddle on "*News-papers and History*" in which, among other statements equally absurd, he declares that the daily press furnishes "*an indispensable guide to the period covered by its work*," and that it "*is the record which nobody else can falsify*."

Of course, one who places so high an estimate upon the newspaper, as an "indispensable guide" and an unimpeachable authority, reads the daily papers carefully, and so, presumably, Mr. Rantoul must have read attentively Mr. Nevins's communication; yet I have never heard of his contradicting the false statements and inferences in that article, either publicly or privately. More than this: I deem it proper to say here that I have satisfactory evidence that Mr. Nevins *went to the Institute rooms for his material for that article*. It would be interesting to note the developments of an inquiry as to who, if anybody, at the Institute, set him astray on his supposed facts.

Having thus fixed the time of the beginning of my connection with the First Congregational Society, I may as well proceed to give the details of my connection with the Institute, regarding which, I have said, Mr. Putnam told the truth when he declared that, in 1860, I was neither an officer nor a committee-man.

Indeed, I think there is no record evidence of my attending any evening meeting or field-meeting — and this accords with my recollection — before April 26, 1860, when the rumor of a proposition to appropriate money from the treasury of the Institute for the purchase of David Nichols's old barn, induced me to attend, in order to hear what reasons could be given for such an expenditure. The failure of this project I have sufficiently described; but I have not explicitly stated, as I do now, that at that meeting it was chiefly *my* opposition to the appropriation which led to the recommitment of the report; and in the debate which then took place between Mr. Peabody and me, which Mr. Rantoul briefly mentions, the two debaters were not on the same

side of the question. The committee, as I have said, excused themselves from pressing the matter at the next meeting (May third) on the ground that they were unprepared. Mr. Rantoul passes over the entries in the Secretary's manuscript record as if they were of no consequence. They do not all appear in the printed Proceedings, from which he prefers to quote, and perhaps the manifest errors and omissions of the printed series are condoned by him because the omission of certain entries saves him the necessity of explaining some things which indicate the possibility that I was not so entirely "in harmony with the committee" as he would have you believe.

My official participation in the meetings of the Institute dates from Feb. 4, 1861, when, for the first time, upon nomination by the Secretary, in the absence of the invalid President and the three vice-presidents I presided for that evening. The circumstances were as follows: —

I have mentioned that a Fair was held in September, 1860, for the benefit of the Institute. This was managed by a circle of prominent ladies of Salem, Mrs. John Lewis Russell presiding. Mrs. Russell had been a schoolma'am, and had retained some of the dictatorial manners which prevailed in school discipline among members of her profession in her day. There was a rule forbidding raffling at the Fair; and Mrs. Russell, suspecting that the great success of one of the lady managers in disposing of the wares for sale at her table was owing to some underhanded resort to a game of chance, openly accused that innocent and most estimable lady with complicity in this forbidden business, and refused to accept her denial. The "tempest in a teapot" that ensued resulted in much chronic hard feeling, and a coolness on the part of Mr. Russell towards the active officers of the Institute.

The flame thus kindled was intensified by another unfortunate circumstance. A small-quarto record of the Fair was printed and sold for the benefit of the Institute. This publication, called the "Weal-Reaf," was conducted by a staff of editors — how many I do not know; but the chief was Mr. Rantoul, who, as is his habit in all such things, eventually monopolized the business, and was addressed, and responded, as "Mr. Editor." Besides his own contributions of harmless puns and conundrums — and a variety of essays by others,

some of them of rare beauty—he admitted a poem by Mr. Russell entitled, “The Garden of the Sea,” in which one of the verses, and perhaps others, offended the critical sense of the Editor. This verse, as I remember, was,—

“The Tubularias
Are clustered, crystal cells,
Within whose lengthened, narrow walls
The roseate floret dwells.”

I confess I can hardly blame the Editor for challenging the credentials of these verses (of which the one I have given is a fair sample) as a fresh importation from Helicon. His attempt, however, to assume the rôle of the Stagyrite and to suggest improvements, stirred the ire of Mr. Russell, and, aggravated by the outcome of the unhappy contest which his wife had started, and in which she had incurred more than a modicum of censure, he pettishly declined to preside at, or even to attend, the evening meetings and field-meetings of the Institute, which, as senior vice-president, he had usually conducted.

There were but two other vice-presidents—Mr. James Upton, and our late lamented secretary, Henry Mason Brooks. As these gentlemen could not conveniently be present at all the regular meetings, I was very glad to come to the assistance of our good friend and mentor, Dr. Wheatland; and so, until the next annual meeting, I was chosen to preside, *pro tempore*, not only at the meeting I have mentioned, but also at the meetings of February eighteenth and March fourth and eighteenth, alternating with Mr. Brooks.

At the annual meeting, on the eighth of May, 1861, when Vice-President Upton assumed the chair, I was chosen to my first office,—Chairman of the Committee on Publication.

This was a year later than the meeting at which the first committee's report on David Nichols's barn was disposed of as I have heretofore stated. Of course, not being present at the annual meeting in 1860, I had no knowledge of the form of the report, nor whether or not it purported to be signed by anybody. Had I known that my name was affixed thereto you may rest assured there would have been what Mr. Rantoul calls, a “collision.”

The report appeared in the June number of the "Historical Collections," for 1860.

As I was not on the Publication Committee chosen that year nor on the committee of the year before, I had no opportunity to insist upon its being made to conform to the fact, and I never saw the report until it was published in the third volume of the Collections, which made its appearance more than a year later. By that time, it was generally thought the whole scheme was dead. The old frame was seldom referred to, and then, usually, with derision. The newspapers were silent about it. It was not mentioned at the Institute, nor in the "Weal-Reaf;" nor, for years after, was it mentioned in our publications, nor alluded to in our prospectuses nor in descriptive pamphlets of the Institute, its possessions and lists of attractions. Whatever indignation I might have felt at the unauthorized use of my name, which, as I have said, I was not aware of until too late to justify me in making, as Dr. Wheatland said to Buffum, "a fuss about it," it passed out of my mind.

Thus forgotten, and apparently abandoned, the old barn or cowhouse remained, soaked by the rains and shaken by the winds of summer, and bearing up its burden of snow and its festoons of icicles in the winter.

Meanwhile the great War of the Rebellion had broken out and there were graver topics to employ the thoughts of every patriot, from the time of the firing on Fort Sumter, — when we organized a citizens' relief committee, with a voluntarily contributed Fund of \$15,000, independent of a like amount voted by the City Council. I was made secretary of the committee and so continued throughout the war. Mr. Rantoul took my records years ago to write up the history of that great benevolence, but I have not seen the result of his study of them, nor the records themselves since. Then, when recruiting began, I became chairman of the recruiting committee formed to see that our volunteers, substitutes, and drafted men were properly protected in their rights, and those dependent upon them cared for. These labors, added to my duties as Register of Probate and Insolvency, — the most laborious public service in the County, — were quite enough to fill up my time, without my starting a crusade to avenge a personal grievance.

Now, to go back to the meeting, in which, as Mr. Rantoul is forced to admit, the report was "discussed by Messrs. Francis Peabody, A. C. Goodell, Jr., and others," for the purpose of explaining to you what the objections were that were then made to the report. The practical objection was to the expenditure of money, as I have stated. But, of course, no such objection would have been made if the committee had clearly identified the old barn with the Meeting-house. Hence, later, when an offer was made to exempt the Institute from all pecuniary liability, the force of the opposition was greatly weakened — since it narrowed the contention down to a sentimental basis rather than a practical; and the possibility of saving the Institute from derisive criticism was not much considered. It was thought, as our experience of the effect of the lapse of time seemed to have proved, that nothing serious need be apprehended, even if the zealous advocates of the project were indulged in their hobby, which might be turned to practical advantage to the Institute by the much needed additional room it would furnish. This may explain why little opposition was made to the final work of the committee.

My main difficulty in accepting the committee's report was three-fold: *First*, granting all they found in regard to the tradition, and all they reported about the dimensions of the barn, they had not made out a case, for the want of positive evidence as to the actual size, shape and materials of the Old Meeting-house. This itself was decisive. *Second*, that the tradition on which they relied may as well have related to the first Quaker meeting-house; and, *finally*, that the building itself did not compare in size with other meeting-houses of that period with no larger congregations. Moreover, the frame was not entirely of oak, as the frame of the Meeting-house most probably was, and, allowing space for the chimney, pulpit, and deacons' seats, the superficial surface of the floor was so small as to render the supposition of its being the Old Meeting-house simply preposterous.

I will not follow the President in attempting to argue the probabilities of the case, either way, but will refer to Mr. Putnam's paper, as showing what may be said against the committee's conclusions, and also recommend those who rely upon the tradition,

to read the admirable essay of Mr. Gilbert L. Streeter, who, I think, after giving due weight to every possible consideration tending to connect that tradition with the old Meeting-house, finds it insufficient, though with some show of plausibility applicable to the first Quaker meeting-house or some part of it.

Mr. Streeter's essay is remarkable for its judicial tone, clearness of demonstration, and lucidity of style. I do not see how it is possible to improve upon it or to add to its force.

I shall not venture upon the fields so well occupied by each of these essayists, whose papers I commend to the perusal of every candid inquirer. There are, however, points that I insisted on in 1860, the statement of which will show some of the issues of the contention which Mr. Rantoul, although he does not wholly ignore it, leaves us to infer was either above his comprehension, or that he deems the objections to the committee's report frivolous. Otherwise he could hardly have had the effrontery to declare, in effect, that the claim that my views did not harmonize with those of the committee "*is new*."

The contract with John Pickering, in 1638-9, required the building of a "catted chimney" twelve feet "*long*," and four feet high above the roof. I differed from the committee in respect to the meaning of these words of dimension; and Colonel Peabody insisting that "catted," a word not found in any dictionary, was equivalent to "catty-cornered," — the meaning of which is equally uncertain, and not recognized by the lexicographers — it was made to serve the purpose of fixing the height of the plates above the sills, because under this impression the committee decided that the fireplace was in one corner of the room and that the chimney rose twelve feet to the roof and four feet above it. On the other hand, I asserted my belief that the "*length*," of the chimney is what we of to-day would call its "*width*." Now this difference is important; since upon the sense in which these words are taken depends the agreement of one of the dimensions of the barn with the height of the Meeting-house. By putting the chimney in the corner, and assuming that it was twelve feet high to the eaves — the difficulty of reconciling the height of the walls of the Meeting-house and the frame of the barn is removed, and one of the dimensions of the former is

established ; but besides the violence done to this theory by the assumption that the posts of the barn had rotted away just enough to require to be spliced so as to agree with the height of the chimney, — which seemed to be begging the question, — the application of the word “ height ” to so much of the chimney as protruded above the roof, and the word “ length ” to the rest of it, seemed arbitrary and unreasonable.

Instances of chimneys built at so early a date were rare, and their dimensions could not be certainly ascertained. During the last forty years, however, more light has been thrown upon that subject. I am indebted to Mr. Putnam for calling my attention to the dimensions of the chimney to the schoolhouse erected in 1647 for Edward Goffe, and Henry Dunster the first president of Harvard College. An extract from the entry reads as follows : —

“ 4. *Item.* That we will erect a chimney, below ten foote wide within the jaumes, and another in the rome above, eight foote $\frac{1}{2}$ wide within the jaumes, in the place where we shal be directed, whereof if the jaumes be different from the wal of the house we will receive eighteene pence a yard for as much as we wal with stone and ten shillings a thousand for what square bricke, we lay, and sixteene shillings a thousand for the bricks that appear out of the rooffe.”

The contract is recorded ; and it is given verbatim in Paige’s history of Cambridge, published in 1877.

This shows the extraordinary width of chimneys at that period ; a fact also commented upon in a communication to the New-England Historical and Genealogical Register, in 1868, on “ Old Houses in Essex County,” by Jacob W. Reed, the genealogist of the Reed or Read families. He gives the dimensions of fireplaces in 1645 as “ about ten feet long, five feet deep, and high enough for a man to stand erect under the great oak mantel-bar, with stools at each end of it for the women and children to sit [on] and knit or read,” etc.

These stools or benches each side of the chimney indicate the origin of the word “ fireside,” which is now used as a metaphor, since we sit in *front* and not at the *side* of modern fireplaces.

You will notice that while Mr. Reed uses the modern word “ fireplace,” and regards the longitudinal dimensions of the opening as the “ *length*,” the Cambridge men use the word

"chimney," instead of *fireplace*, in giving us the "*width*" of the opening. "*Chimney*" appears to have been the primitive and regular word for fireplace. I have taken the pains to trace the use of the word back in the French language from which we derive it. It is one of the oldest words both in English and French, and in either language applies more properly to the fireplace — its application, even in English, to the flue or pipe, being comparatively modern, according to Chambers, who finds no evidence of the use of "stacks," in England, earlier than the twelfth century.

Littre defines "*cheminée*," the French form of the word, as "*Endroit dans une chambre, disposé pour servir de foyer et communiquant avec le dehors par un tuyau qui donne issue à la fumée*;" that is, a place in a room, arranged to serve as a hearth, and communicating with the outside by a pipe, or flue [*tuyau*] which gives vent to the smoke. He traces its use in literature back to the *Roman de la Rose*, in the latter part of the 13th century.

As late as 1706, Judge Sewall records in his diary that "Mr. Salter makes us a little Chimney in my Chimney: make a Fire in it to try it." That is, the mason contracted the fireplace.

In Murray's New English Dictionary the word is etymologically derived from the Latin *caminus* a furnace, forge or oven (by metonymy, a fireplace), and in this sense the lexicographer notes its use in the year 584, in a Frankish document — relating to a *solarium cum caminata*; that is, a sun-bath with a fireplace.

In the exquisite idyl of "L'Allegro," Milton gives us an example of this use of the word "chimney," as well as of the use, of the word *length*, for what we now call *width*, of the opening, where, after Puck had threshed out the corn, he, —

" — lies him down the lubbar fiend,
And, stretch'd out all the chimney's length,
Basks at the fire his hairy strength."

Warton in a note to his edition of Milton's "Juvenile Poems," published in 1790, explains the second line by saying that Puck or "Robin Goodfellow," Milton's "drudging goblin," "stretched along the whole *breadth* of the fireplace, basks till the morning."

Steele, in the "Tatler," and Scott, in "Old Mortality," use "chimney" in the same sense.

The last authority that I shall cite on the subject of the size of old fireplaces in New England is one of Mr. Rantoul's "seven investigators," and therefore his testimony ought to be conclusive.

In one of the pictures of domestic life in 1692, which Mr. Upham draws so graphically in his "History of the Salem Witchcraft," he writes: —

"As a wintry evening drew on, the wide, deep fireplace — *equalling in width nearly the whole of one side of the room*, and so deep that benches were permanently attached to the jambs, on which two or more could comfortably sit — was duly prepared."

Here he gives us a clew to the signification of the phrase "chimney-corner," which, but for such glimpses of the past, would be wholly unintelligible to modern ears. This phrase, in modern general use, I do not find in the Encyclopædic Dictionary; but it is defined in Webster's International Dictionary, as "the space between the sides of the fireplace and the fire." For centuries this warm retreat for both old and young has been known by this name; thus, Sir Philip Sidney, in his "Defence of Poesy," written in 1581, presents this instance of its use: —

"He cometh unto you with a tale that holdeth children from play and old men from the chimney-corner."

Fortunately, we are not without positive and direct evidence of the size of the "chimney," or fireplace, of the Old Meeting-house, for there is on record in the City Hall an order, passed in 1662, for providing, "at the charge of the town, a bier for carrying of corpses to burying; and the chimney, in the meeting-house is the place appointed for it to stand in." I give it in modern spelling.

I have the dimensions of a bier, more than one hundred years old, I am told, still in use in St. Peter's Church, and of another used at Harmony Grove Cemetery. The former measures seven feet by two feet. Its height is twenty-two inches, and the arms project eighteen inches; while the latter, which has

been in use twenty-five years, at least, is somewhat larger ; being seven feet eight inches in length, two feet three inches in width, and eighteen inches high. The bier of 1662 was, probably, not more diminutive than the smaller of these modern litters. By the order, as we see, it was to be kept "in the chimney," which, I say, means the fireplace ; but if it was shoved up the flue, Mr. Rantoul, who knows it all, and who, at the expense of the Essex Institute, has published so much matter to the edification of no one but himself, should devote a little time to making this clear. I suggest that he take an early opportunity to print a brief supplement informing us how they managed to squeeze the bier into the narrow flue of that monstrosity of masonry, with which George M. White, or some one else, evidently under Mr. Rantoul's direction, has illustrated the sheet put forth by Mr. Rantoul in 1898, in the name of the Essex Institute, and in the pamphlet "Story of the Meeting House," issued by him in 1897 under the same pretence — I presume also at the expense of the Institute, which it would be not so difficult to ascertain if Mr. Rantoul had not succeeded in taking from the Society the choice of the Committee on Publication, and assumed absolute and unlimited authority to print what he pleases, and to modify or reject whatever productions of others he deems it prudent to withhold from the public.

These pamphlets are offered for sale at ten cents per copy, and thus, in my judgment, a double *sale* is effected : first of the pamphlet, and then, of the purchaser.

There seems to be no excuse for Mr. Rantoul's reticence on the subject of the town order I have referred to, since, if he deems the public records of insufficient credibility even when ratified by Felt, in his "Annals," he, according to his own ideas of the unimpeachable veracity of the newspaper, ought at least to have paid some heed to the anonymous article in the "Salem Evening News" of June 18, 1898, in which this extract from the records receives the implied sanction of the writer and the printer.

As for Mr. Peabody's theory of the meaning of "catted chimney," there was more sense in his adopting it, so that he might relegate that troublesome, but, in this instance, indispen-

sable, adjunct of the meeting-house, to a convenient corner. Since, as I have said, the lexicographers failed to throw any light upon the signification of the word, there was a fair excuse for his giving play to his imagination. In all my reading of our ancient New-England authors, I do not remember to have encountered this word more than once ; but in that single instance its meaning is given with it. This instance occurs in the preface to Increase Mather's "Remarkable Providences," where he describes the freaks of a violent flash of lightning in 1653, "which brake and shivered one of the needles of the katted, *or wooden*, chimney," etc.

I think, therefore, on the authority of Mather, as well as from the other data I have given, that we are fully warranted in holding to the opinion that Mr. Pickering engaged to build a *wooden* chimney twelve feet wide, as we should now say, and perhaps four or five feet deep. This "chimney," the pulpit, the communion table, the gallery stairs and the deacons' seat, together with a sufficient allowance, besides, for the swinging of the door, or doors — if, indeed, they swung *in*, would leave but very scant room for a single, flourishing class in a modern Sunday-school ; which, to my mind, renders the supposition that Mr. Nichols's little cowhouse was the First Meeting-house, wholly incredible.

In regard to the probable size of the Old Meeting-house, in comparison with contemporary similar structures in the vicinity of Salem, and with the dimensions of its immediate successor, I spent considerable time on that subject in or about 1860, with very unsatisfactory results. Since then, however, notwithstanding the President's declaration that "*the committee . . . had before it just the evidence we have before us, — no more and no less,*" I have learned, I think it proper to say, that there has been a great accession to our means of satisfactorily determining the facts which the committee were appointed to ascertain. I have already shown this, in part, in my remarks on the measurement of the chimney, — one of my most important data being that furnished by Mr. Putnam ; — the record of the contract for building the chimney for the Cambridge schoolhouse which was first published by Dr. Paige in 1877.

Mr. Reed's communication to the "New England Historical

and Genealogical Register " was published, I believe, the same year in which young Putnam was born, and eight years after the committee's first report was rendered.

The dimensions of the various meeting-houses in Danvers, Marblehead, and Cambridge, also, have since been published in the histories of those towns, respectively ; and here, for time will not permit me to pursue the subject exhaustively, I will give the result of a tabulation I once made of the superficial areas, in square feet, of the floors of six of these meeting-houses, with the name of the town to which each belongs and the date of the building of each : —

	Size.	Square feet.	Date.	
Salem . . .	{	$17 \times 20 = 340$	$1634-1639$	} According to the committee.
		$17 \times 45 = 765$	$1639-1670$	
		$50 \times 60 = 3000$	$1670-1718$	
Cambridge .		$40 \times 40 = 1600$		
Danvers or Sa- lem Village .	{	$34 \times 28 = 952$	1672	
		$48 \times 42 = 2016$	1701	
Marblehead.	{	$20 \times 40 = 800$	1672	
The leanto only on the back side)				

By comparing this list you will observe that the leanto addition to the meeting-house in Marblehead, which only a few years before was an unimportant precinct of Salem, contains nearly two and one-half times the area, as given by the committee, of the original meeting-house of the great town of Salem, before Marblehead, Beverly or Danvers was set off, and thirty-five square feet more than the same meeting-house contained after its enlargement, and as it remained down to 1670. No pride of opinion, and no blind deference to any mere conjecture, no matter from whom, should deter us from reviewing a judgment based upon imperfect evidence, which did not include all the above facts, and others increasing the disparity by their showing an increased difference of population now ascertainable with comparative accuracy.

Even the little community of "The Farmers," of Salem Village, — to whom was given the pulpit and deacons' seat of the First

Meeting-house when the latter was deserted for a new one,—when they conveyed those trophies to the new meeting-house in Danvers, installed this furniture in a room which, if we must credit the committee, was actually more capacious by nearly two hundred square feet than the old central Meeting-house, where they had continued to worship as a part of the congregation of the First Church down to the time of its being dismantled—which was only a short time before they built a house for themselves, exclusively. Are these facts of history? or has there been some mistake?

As for the new, or second, meeting-house in Salem, we have the concurring testimony of several who remembered its great size. The actual area of the floor, as we have seen, was three thousand feet, but it had spacious galleries, and was called by Mather and Calef, “The Great Meeting-House.” Sewall, also, who sat within it in 1692 with his associate councillors, when they came down to examine the accused witches, was impressed with “the very great assembly there,” and yet he had witnessed without comment the vast throngs which overflowed the North Meeting-house in Boston when the Mathers were in the zenith of their popularity.

Is it likely that the predecessor of this great edifice was David Nichols’s little cowhouse with a piece added thereto measuring only twenty-five feet by seventeen feet, and twelve feet stud?—And that those spacious galleries, accommodating, in all probability, hundreds, were the immediate successors of the little roost which we see to-day,—and another like it, opposite, which has disappeared? It seems to me absolutely fatuous to believe such a thing.

But on this point I must refer you to those students of our local history, who, like Mr. Putnam, care more for facts, than sentiment; and I take leave of this part of the subject by asking you, If it is reasonable that Salem, after using a meeting-house that, beginning with an area of three hundred and forty square feet, according to the committee, had grown only four hundred and twenty-five feet in the thirty-six years between 1634 and 1670, suddenly jumped into new quarters embracing an area of three thousand square feet?—And this, after having parted with

"The Farmers," who were not content with a new house of a smaller area than nine hundred and fifty-two feet?

The writer of the first report calls the "relic" our "Loretto," our "*Santissima Casa*." The writer of the second report calls it, in plain English, "this holy house;" and Mr. Upham chimes in by declaring, "here is our Loretto, to be visited by all in coming ages and from foreign lands." I agree that no more appropriate name could be given to it, for I think there is quite as much evidence of its having been the First Meeting-house as there is that the house of the Virgin Mary, after three or four miraculous translations through the air, should finally rest in Macerata; and what makes the parallel still more interesting is that Mr. Endicott had another "*Santissima Casa*" on the corner of Washington and Church streets. It is quite the fashion for those who believe in miracles to enhance the difficulty of believing, in order to make the act of faith more meritorious. Witness the holy robes at Trèves and Moscow and at half a dozen other places; and the handkerchief of Saint Veronica, also miraculously duplicated. And it is even said that there are two skulls of a certain saint, one that served him in youth and the other in adult age.

In the autumn of 1863 there was a sudden revival of interest in the project of restoring the Old Meeting-house. This followed the arrival of Mr. George Atkinson Ward, the distinguished stranger from New York, whom I have already described. For forty-one years he had been away from the scenes of his youth, and now came back to spend his remaining years in the society of his sister and to gratify himself in the renewal of old intimacies and in the forming of new friendships.

Tall and erect, yet well-proportioned, and neatly attired, he was a conspicuous figure on the street, where, with the dignity of a Roman senator, the grace of Apollo, and the genial courtesy and affectionate manner of an older brother, he won the goodwill of all who met him.

Mr. Endicott, chairman of the first committee, and writer of the first report, was away in a distant asylum, the victim of a chronic mental malady; and but two of the committee remained — Colonel Peabody and Mr. Phippen. Ward, who at once took

an active interest in the Institute, going from shop to shop along the principal streets, and into the houses of his friends, and the workshops of mechanics, soliciting new members of that Society, soon took up the abandoned "relic." He found Mr. Upham a willing subject for the contagion of his enthusiasm; nor was Colonel Peabody less ready to corroborate by internal evidence, which he demonstrated to the satisfaction of his interested companions, the probabilities which they had derived from tradition or from the records, in regard to the location of the gallery, the door and the pulpit; and, — the recorded "*length*" of the chimney being assumed to be the *height*, — to accurately estimate how much should be added at the foot of the several posts and studs to make them agree with the recorded standard.

The subject of reërecting was now again brought before the Institute, — this time by Mr. Ward. On the twenty-eighth of December, 1863, he informed the assembled members that measures were in progress to obtain possession of the frame of the old building on the land of David Nichols, in the rear of Boston street, and to place the same in the rear of Plummer Hall.

Let it be observed that this was the first step taken with the knowledge of the Institute towards reviving the project begun in 1859, and which had been slumbering since 1860, and that the mover, although a member of the society, was not a member of the committee. Immediately *after* this announcement, not *before*, as Mr. Rantoul perversely represents, Mr. Ward was chosen a member of the committee, taking the place left vacant by the decease of Mr. Endicott, two weeks before.

These facts I take from the printed proceedings, which Mr. Rantoul prefers to the secretary's manuscript record. For myself, I need not refer to any record; for I presided at the meeting, put the motion to vote, and recollect the circumstances.

About six weeks before the advent of Mr. Ward, occurred the field-meeting at Salem Willows, on which occasion, Mr. Rantoul disingenuously represents, I guided a party to Gallows Hill to visit "The remnant of the Old First Church" — twice referring to this excursion as if it was an indubitable fact, and evidently for the malicious satisfaction of "rubbing it in."

But the record of my connection with this field-meeting, — which did not appear in our printed Proceedings until published the next year, — is, in all its details, *without the slightest foundation in fact*. I have already given you an idea of the strain which my official duties, and my services for the men enlisting for the army imposed upon me. It was seldom that I could get a half-holiday, and still more rarely a whole day, in which to attend a field-meeting. This may explain why I did not attend the meeting that day, nor escort any visitors or others about town, or elsewhere; and I had to repress a strong desire to drive to the Willows to bring back some of my friends who, I feared, had been exposed to the tremendous rainfall in the afternoon, which made that day memorable. Indeed, I do not remember to have seen that report before my attention was called to it by Mr. Rantoul's recent paper, my copy of the third volume of the Proceedings containing it, remaining uncut until this controversy began. Since then, a few minutes of inquiry soon set my wondering mind at rest upon the question as to how such an absurd and utterly groundless report could have got into the Secretary's records. It seems that Mr. Coroner Walton, yet living — and may he long be spared to us! — then on the staff of the Salem "Register," and who habitually attended the field-meetings, and sometimes reported the proceedings — with the commendable enterprise of an up-to-date journalist *wrote out the whole report in the morning, before the out-of-town visitors arrived*. Possibly, it had been planned, without my knowledge, that I was to act as a guide in the manner stated in his report; in which case, had no other engagement prevented, undoubtedly, I should have complied with the request of any one to be shown the place and the building, *if I could find either*; but it is equally certain *that I never did*; and so I lost, what now appears to have been my only opportunity to see Mr. Nichols's old cow-house, *in situ*. That chance passing, it happens that I never set eyes on any part of it until it was set up back of Plummer Hall; and, to save my life, I could not tell within an eighth of a mile where it probably stood.

See, now, what a *ridiculus mus* this mountain has brought forth! and note, also, that the Secretary got his memoranda for

this part of his record from a *newspaper*; the repertory which Mr. Rantoul declares to be "the record which nobody else can falsify," "the last resort" upon which one must "rely for a genuine impression of the day," in which "nothing can be suppressed" — "nothing can be distorted"; and "an indispensable guide to the period covered by its work."

A more recent and very apposite instance of this same infallible veracity of the press is shown in the report of our last evening meeting in Academy Hall when the address upon Paper Currency was delivered. The Salem "News" of the next day informed the public that President Rantoul presided and introduced the lecturer. Now, since, at the president's request, I relieved him on that evening, the audience must have been astonished to observe that the slender and graceful president had suddenly grown so stout, and have marvelled that in his introductory remarks he should have trespassed only two minutes upon the time allotted to the lecturer, and omitted to repeat his story of what he had seen or done in Europe. Forty years hence, for want of more interesting and important employment, some future president of the Institute may make a "powerful" proclamation of this incident, in a Boston newspaper, — if Macaulay's New Zealander does not get in ahead of him to prevent it by smashing the presses and knocking the types into pi.

Right here, let me add, because it will save my commenting further on the subject, that it was Dr. Wheatland's practice, while secretary, to save cuttings from the newspapers with his other loose memoranda, jotted down casually, and to place them in separate parcels, to be used at his leisure in making up his back records; for the Doctor, being not only one of the most methodical but one of the busiest of men, especially about the time of our meetings, frequently had not the opportunity to collect and marshal, at the time, all the materials needed for a full record of the doings of the day. I have known him to put off the entry of the record of a meeting for months while awaiting a reply to an application to one of the speakers for further information respecting the subject, or substance, of his remarks. And in his last illness, I presume, it is well remembered how painfully, in a double sense, he went over his memoranda, enter-

ing, revising, and extending his records accordingly. From this peculiarity of the Doctor's habit, it happened that the usual parliamentary form of reading the records of the last meeting, when it was not wholly dispensed with, was cursorily done from the secretary's loose minutes; so that there was little opportunity for amending the record, and less need for such a proceeding inasmuch as everybody was satisfied with the Doctor's solicitude to do no injustice to any one. In the *printing* of the records in the Proceedings, however, it was his custom to omit such motions, and incidents, and even such records of meetings, as he deemed not sufficiently important to be preserved in print. In this, he followed the practice of the learned societies of Europe and America, in the publication of their transactions. If one, therefore, delights to split hairs in such things he can amuse himself infinitely in seeking discrepancies between the printed and the written record, and imperfections in both; although, of course, the written original entries are, technically, the legal record, and practically the more full and accurate.

But to return from this digression. At a meeting of the Institute on Monday the twenty-fifth of January, 1864, *not the twenty-sixth* as is incorrectly given in the Collections, Mr. Ward again appeared, and read his account of the formation of the ESSEX HISTORICAL SOCIETY, to which Mr. Rantoul refers, and which was afterwards printed in our Collections. The following entry in the record is particularly worthy of notice, since, so far from there being no record of any want of harmony in the committee — as Mr. Rantoul has asserted, (by which he means any dissent on my part from the committee's views) he persisting in his false assumption that I was a member of the committee — it shows that there was, presumably, a lively debate; and that I took part in the discussion: —

“MONDAY, JANUARY 25 — EVENING MEETING.

“The President [Huntington] in the chair.

. . . “Allusions having been made in Mr. Ward's communication, to the existence of the frame of the original ‘First Church,’ in Salem, on the land of David Nichols, rear of Boston street, considerable discussion ensued as to the proof of the above-mentioned frame being that of the ‘First Church.’ The President, Francis Peabody, G. A. Ward, A. C. Goodell, Jr., and Rev.

G. D. Wildes, participated in the discussion; the arguments adduced SEEMED to favor the affirmative of the question."

Now, without giving further particulars from other sources, let me supplement that record by the statement that the debate was protracted and somewhat heated; and it was the occasion of the reproaches which Mr. Ward applied to me on his way home, and which I have mentioned as being within the memory of witnesses still living.

All this Mr. Rantoul could have learned from me, if it had not served his purpose better, first, to spring upon me, publicly, a false accusation, and await my reply, which he is now getting.

From this time forth the doings of the "investigators" ceased to engage the attention of the Institute until the second report was acted upon on the nineteenth of June, the next year. Meanwhile, the business seems to have been exclusively conducted by Colonel Peabody and Mr. Ward, save that Mr. Upham, upon the death of the latter, succeeded him upon the committee. The date of Mr. Ward's death was Sept. 22, 1864, and Mr. Upham was appointed to the committee eight days later. Though thus snuffed out in Salem, the flame of interest began to break forth with brighter beams in the Massachusetts Historical Society, in Boston. At a meeting of that Society on the thirteenth of October, a member, Mr. William C. Endicott, nephew of Mr. Peabody, informed his hearers that:—

"The frame of the first house of worship erected in Salem, on the site of the present edifice occupied by the First Church, had been indicated by tradition as still in existence, and forming part of a building in another vicinity; that recent investigations by members of the Essex Institute, among whom the late George A. Ward, Esq., was actively engaged, had resulted in the identification of that portion of the building which had been used in the construction of the old church; and that careful measurements of different parts of the structure corresponded exactly with the dimensions of the first house of worship, as recorded in contemporary documents.

"By the exertions of certain members of the Institute, and other citizens of Salem, the frame had been secured, and, after being restored in those parts which were decayed, was to be erected on a lot in the rear of Plummer Hall, and protected by a substantial and permanent covering; the interior being so arranged as to exhibit the timbers of the ancient building, and, at the same time, to afford a place of deposit for certain antiquarian relics, from the cabinet of the Institute."

This statement by Mr. Endicott puts a new phase on the matter, since we must presume that, if not inspired by the "committee," it was not made without their sanction. The participation of the Institute as a body, and the report of 1860, seem to have been entirely ignored. Observe, that he declares that *some members* of the Institute, including Mr. Ward, "who was actively engaged," had *recently identified a portion* of the building "in another vicinity," and that by their "*careful measurement* of different parts of the structure" they were found "*to correspond exactly with the dimensions*" of the First Meeting-house, "*as recorded in contemporary documents.*"

If I were to adopt Mr. Rantoul's style of argumentation, I should begin by asking, "Now, who was Mr. Endicott, and what was the character of the body of men that he was addressing? Were they guilty of planning or conniving at a scheme for the preservation of a 'sham relic'? Were they 'victims of fraud'? Or would they have taken notice of the excursion of Mr. Ward and other members of the Institute, and *other citizens of Salem*, to Gallows Hill to take the dimensions of a 'desecrated shrine'?" God forbid!

Mr. Rantoul knowing the facts I have related in regard to the doings and methods of the Essex Institute, — since nothing in that line could have "*escaped the restless energy of his mind*" who wrote the "Powerful Defence of the Old Salem Relic," — for such is the heading which he or the editor of the "Transcript" without objection from him, gives to the paper to which I am now replying, — and knowing my connection with the relic, and aware of the shifting grounds of those who claimed that, in whole or in part, it was identical with the First Meeting-house erected in Salem, comes before the public in the name of the Essex Institute to resent a grievance in which he endeavors to implicate me and to show that I had added to my offence by acting a double part. His "Defence" after it had become the property of the Institute by the vote to lay it on the table, he incontinently, and without permission of the Directors, to whom it was addressed, rushed off to the "Boston Evening Transcript," as a lyddite bomb ostensibly to demolish Mr. Eben Putnam, but indirectly to annihilate me. But the experiment may teach

him caution. There may be some who in view of his predicament will think, if not say, with Hamlet:—

“For 'tis the sport to have the engineer
Hoist with his own petar.”

He tells us the “committee” had the *same* “evidence” we have before us — no more and no less.” Why, then, does he not settle the whole controversy by publishing the “contemporary documents” which Mr. Endicott told the Massachusetts Historical Society “contain the record of the dimensions” of the First Meeting-house, with which, after “careful measurement” by his “seven investigators” the different parts of Mr. Nichols’s old cowhouse were found to “*correspond exactly*”?

In the last paragraph of the report of Mr. Endicott’s remarks I notice that we get the first intimation that the useful service *to the Institute*, which was a principal inducement to its acceptance of the custody of the old frame, was recognized by any one who may be considered as representing the committee. This corroborates what I have already said on this subject.

The identity thus indicated in 1864 by Mr. Endicott was fully established to the satisfaction of the Massachusetts Historical Society in 1876, when Dr. Ellis, in a memoir of his friend, Mr. Upham, declares that the veritable frame and rafters and the “*rough-hewn oaken beams*, cut when there was no saw-mill,” had been “set up again *in exact renewal of form and materials*!”

Three years later, however, Mr. Winthrop, president of the society, quietly ignores the whole affair in his remarks on the occasion of the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the settlement of Boston, when he reviewed, at considerable length, the early history of the first settlement of Salem and the organization of the First Church there.

Of the effect of the revival, or resurrection, rather, of 1864-5, upon people nearer the home of the Institute I shall say something further after I have discussed the report of 1865, when my name again appears in print, surreptitiously affixed to the printed report.

Mr. Rantoul attempts to prove that I actually subscribed that

paper by alleging that it was printed in the Historical Collections for June that year, and that I was editor. Let us see how the records, and the internal evidence of the Historical Collections bear him out in this.

The records show, and it is not disputed, that, in February of that year, I engaged to edit the Historical Collections printed during the year, throughout. Also, that, on the eleventh of that month, the December number of the Collections for 1864 remained unprinted. It was a time of important changes in our relations with the press. Our former printer, Mr. Swasey, had retired from the printing-office, leaving this work undone, and various proposals were made and entertained for continuing it. Mr. Frederick W. Putnam had been authorized to have the "Naturalist" printed in Boston; and some chaffering was had with several printers, including Mr. Robert Manning, who represented the establishment under which Mr. Charles W. Felt was carrying on his experiments with his invention for type-setting. All this took time, insomuch, that the volume for 1864, for the printing of which Dr. Wheatland in February, 1865, was given unlimited discretion to contract, lingered along indefinitely, and the report of the committee on publication, May 9, 1866, shows that the numbers for October and December, 1865, were still unprinted. This was more than a year after my engagement, and three months after my year would have elapsed had I continued as Editor; but in the same report of the committee on publication in which the chairman announced the backward state of the Historical Collections for 1865, he announced, also, that a *change of editors had been arranged* for the ensuing year. Now, at what time had this change been made? It must have been some time before May, 1866, when it was spoken of as a thing of the *past*; and at that time, we have seen, the numbers for October and December were still unprinted.

Let us now turn to the printed Collections, for assistance in our inquiry. We find in the number for February an introduction unmistakably written by me; and the April number being bound up with it, must also be charged to me. But the next number (for June) — the number which contains the second report of the committee — looks suspiciously like the work of

Mr. Rantoul. This circumstance induced me to ransack my old files and papers, with the result of the discovery of the manuscript of Mr. Upham's Memoir of Mr. Ward, printed as the first article of the April number — on which I find this memorandum in pencil, written by me : "Ward d. Sept. 22, 1864, *my last order as Editor.*"

This caused me again to have recourse to the secretary's records to learn when, if at all, the Committee on Publication had appointed my successor. But the search was fruitless. However, I found in the Collections, that the report of the committee immediately followed the leading article, — "The Narrative of Major Thompson Maxwell," communicated by Mr. Rantoul. At the end of the next number, I found an "Additional Notice," or supplement to this article, introduced by six lines signed "ED." It is a suggestive circumstance that this "additional notice" consists of an extract from a private letter to Mr. Rantoul by Mr. Thomas Aspinwall. I say, suggestive, because it induces the question, who but himself could have had access to Mr. Rantoul's private correspondence? Not I, for as I have said, and as the records show, my functions, as editor, had ceased ; and I am sure I never *saw* the manuscript or had the article in my possession. Turning back to the first article of this second number, I found it to be a paper on the Seal of the Court of County Commissioners, which I recognized as having been prepared by Mr. James Kimball, at that time chairman of that Board. I remember this distinctly, because he discussed the subject with me, we having offices in the same court-house. This article is also subscribed, "ED." I was now evidently on the right scent, and was encouraged to believe that with a little patience I might yet run down the game.

But on again recurring to the Secretary's records, in which any important changes in the constitution of the committee on publication, or any action of similar importance, — such as a new contract with the printers, or the appointment of an Editor, should have been recorded by the Secretary (as was the case when I undertook to edit), I got no information for my pains. Not discouraged, however, I pursued the inquiry by further exploration of the Collections. I found nothing bearing upon the

subject in the next issue ; that is, that of October and December which, we have seen, was behindhand in May, 1866 — save that, in the October number, I found a letter to Mr. Rantoul's friend, Mrs. Hanaford, of Beverly, dated Dec. 4, 1865 ; or two months later than the book itself purports to have appeared. But when I reached the *next* number I found the introductory article, and the article which follows, — on the city seal (both anonymous) — unmistakably in Mr. Rantoul's style ; and the authorship of the latter was betrayed by a letter from Mr. George Peabody, addressed to "Robert S. Rantoul, Esqr." I also found, *on the inside of the first cover* — by reason of what friction between the Editor and Dr. Wheatland, I know not, since I had ceased to have anything to do with the editing or publishing — a special notice requiring all communications to be addressed to the "Secretary of the Essex Institute." This would have been superfluous in my day, because I never doubted that, as he was corresponding, as well as recording, secretary, he was the proper person to receive, in the first instance, all communications in regard to the business of the Society. In the next number I found that this conflict has assumed a more definite form, since, while the Secretary continued his notice on the *inside of the first cover* — on the *outside of the last cover*, the following notice appeared : —

"Communications received by H. WHEATLAND, *Secretary*, or R. S. RANTOUL and W. P. UPHAM, *Editors*, Salem, Mass."

Here, at last, I had literally tracked my game to *cover*. Mr. Rantoul's concealment would have continued perfect, if he had not indiscreetly trusted to the supposed fleeting nature of the temporary paper cover which is usually rejected by the book-binder. Nowhere else, so far as I have been able to discover, is there to be found the slightest hint of his appointment to the office of Editor. The search became more interesting as I proceeded. In the next (September) number Dr. Wheatland reasserts his rights as Secretary by renewing his notice, and Mr. Rantoul's notice is omitted. In the December number, however, while the Secretary's notice appears on the *inside of the first cover*, the *outside of the last cover* contains a notice requesting

communications to be sent either to Doctor Wheatland, *Secretary*, or R. S. Rantoul, *Editor*.

Thus, at last, Mr. Rantoul shows his victorious hand. The modest, conscientious Mr. Upham retires from the contest. He declines to make a claim to the exercise of any function which had been claimed by the Secretary; and Mr. Rantoul, alone, mounts into the saddle of his hobby. In 1868, I find, however, that Mr. Upham appears as the only editor; but, Dr. Wheatland, being then President, they join, in apparent concord, in advertising for the receipt of communications.

How long Mr. Upham remained undisturbed in the office of Editor I have not taken the pains to inquire, since I have Mr. Rantoul's declaration, under his own hand, written nearly two years ago, that, "*for lack of a better*," he had "done substantially all the editing that is done here for a number of years."

Now, to go back to the meeting of June 19, 1865, when the second report was read and acted upon. I was not present on that occasion, for, besides the pressure of business which I have already given as an excuse for not continuing longer as Editor, I had been by unanimous vote of the citizens of Salem, elected Alderman — an office which I had not sought. This choice, I suppose, was because of my known zeal to secure the introduction of water from Wenham Pond. On that account, also, it fell to me to be made chairman of the committee upon whom devolved the drafting of the ordinance establishing a Board of Water Commissioners and defining their duties, and to preside at the numerous hearings of remonstrants, and other cranks, who were trying to defeat the will of the public expressed in the referendum, by a large vote in the proportion of eleven to one. Besides this, I had to discharge the routine of my official civic duties — which were unusually pressing that year on account of the close of the war, the great Fourth of July celebration, and the perambulation of the city boundaries; it being a quinquennial year. Still, further, during the summer, the stockholders of the street railway, which had been going behindhand from the start, called a meeting to decide what should be done to reform, or dispose of, the road. Being a small stockholder, I attended, and was made chairman of an investigating committee of which I wrote

the report intended to be exact and exhaustive and containing alternative suggestions for improving the railroad and its financial condition. The report was adopted and a new Board of Directors chosen, over which I was called to preside. This was the beginning of nineteen years of toil in bringing the road from a state of bankruptcy up to an annual earning of thirty per cent profit. This proved a strain on mind and body, which, super-added to my official work in the Probate Office, and the City Hall, eventually forced me to quit all business, for a time.

In the same year, 1865, I was appointed one of the first Board of Commissioners on the Province Laws, without pay; which finished its work in 1867. This added burden, which I carried at night, after the labors of the day were ended, forced me, reluctantly, to retire from active service in the Institute.

It was in the very climax of these duties — or about then — that the meeting was held at which the committee on the old frame made their report. I was not present, for I could not be; but Mr. Rantoul *was*; and read his paper on Thompson Maxwell, which appeared as the first article in the June number of the Collections, immediately preceding the report of the committee. Of course, as this report did not appear in the newspapers, I knew nothing of it and had no reason to suspect that it purported to be signed by me, when everybody, including Mr. Rantoul himself, must have been aware of my disbelief and opposition.

That the number for June and August, 1865, could not have appeared until late in the year is probable, since, as we have seen, the next issue for October and December was not in print in May, 1866.

At what time I first learned of this repeated license with my name, I know not, nor who was responsible for it; but if Mr. Rantoul was the actual, though disguised editor of that number, *he must have known that I did not affix my signature*. And I now aver, and CHARGE TO HIS FACE, that if he says he ever saw the manuscript paper *with the signatures attached*, which he intimates he can produce when the occasion calls for it, but declines to show to the reporters, or to any person connected with the Institute, — and, as the editor of the "Salem Evening

News," says, "cleverly dodges the question," put to him by the editor — he must be held party to the outrage ; and, moreover, if he edited that number, as it seems probable he did, from the evidence I have shown, that HE HIMSELF affixed *all the signatures*, either with his own hand, or by some one acting under his direction.

One indubitable mark of spuriousness in my name, as there given, is the absence of the addition "junior." It is true that when I was elected to the county office, being then a resident of Lynn, and the only person of that name in that city, I never used the addition, so that, in my official capacity, throughout my term I continued the practice I began with ; but, in my private capacity, after my return to Salem, I invariably added the "junior." It was engraved on my visiting-cards, and appears in every instance, I believe, in the record of my election to any office or committee of the Institute ; and, in short, everywhere, except in the heading of my communications to the Collections, or other papers which had been first printed in a newspaper, and transferred to the Collections with a heading prepared in the printing-office, and wherein my name printed as Register of Probate and Insolvency, without the addition, seems to have been copied.

Now, whoever affixed my name to the first report seems not to have known the distinction in my practice as to the use of "junior," and, probably, misled by looking at the Probate notices in the newspapers, copied my official signature without the addition. So when the editor of the Collections for June, 1865, made up his copy for the printers, he followed the precedent of 1860, making only the changes rendered necessary by the deaths of Messrs. Endicott and Ward, and the accession of Mr. Upham, and leaving my name without the "junior," added as before.

It may be asked, "Why did you not make, as Dr. Wheatland would say, 'a fuss about it'?" Well, in the first place, you know, or ought to know, *that is not my style*, as the slang phrase goes. If I undertook to correct every erroneous or unauthorized statement that is publicly made concerning me, I should have little time left for any other employment, unless I kept a clerk specially for the purpose ; and, in the case of a *newspaper*,

notwithstanding Mr. Rantoul's truckling laudation of the press, you never knew an editor even to *appear* to retract without ingeniously and meanly contriving to make the libel worse than before. This is a part of the trade. Everything favorable to the victim of editorial malice is intentionally suppressed, and every unfounded rumor that can be availed of to further smirch the victim is printed under sensational scare-heads, without first giving the victim a chance to refute it.

At the annual meeting of 1865, previous to the meeting at which the second report was made, I presided. On that occasion Mr. Huntington retired from the presidency and Mr. Peabody was elected in his place. As usual, there was but one form of ballot which, as I recollect, was thrown *unscratched and without opposition*. On that ballot my name appeared as vice-president, but the candidate whose election was chiefly desired by all of us was Colonel Peabody. He was, first and last, *my* candidate, and I do not remember a word or hint of objection to him. Dr. Wheatland, Mr. Frederick W. Putnam and I had labored earnestly with the Colonel, entreating him to allow us to present his name, and had succeeded. We had a purpose in this. Besides enlisting in behalf of the Institute the interest of a man of his intelligence and ability, we desired to secure his coöperation in a grand scheme to increase the usefulness of the Institute, in which he, of all available men, was the most likely to succeed. I need only say, that this was the obtaining from his friend and distant relative, George Peabody, of London — whom he was intending to visit on his next voyage to Europe — a fund sufficient to relieve us of the great and increasing burden of our Natural History collections. The success of this effort is shown in the Peabody Academy of Science for the County of Essex, which was the direct result of Colonel Peabody's application. We were all alive with favorable anticipations, yet not without some apprehension as to the result of this mission, the fulfilment of which we felt depended upon electing Colonel Peabody.

This was one of the most important events in the history of our Society, and no devoted friend of Dr. Wheatland (who had given his life to the upbuilding of the Institute and was anxious that the scheme should not fail) and no well-wisher for the suc-

cess of the twofold object for which its members had labored since its organization, would have interposed an obstacle to its progress, or introduced an element of discord into its deliberations. Neither could the impressions which that event must have made upon his memory, be effaced by the lapse of time or the counter-excitement of other occasions.

By invitation of Mr. Rantoul I prepared, to be delivered before the large assembly at our Half-Century Commemoration exercises, in 1898, a full account of this interesting episode in the history of the Institute, and of all the steps that led up to it; but having necessarily given to Professor Putnam—who of all men living had done most for the upbuilding and fame of the Society—full credit for the part he had taken in the founding of the *Academy*, I was not only not called upon to speak, but from the manuscript of my address all allusions to Putnam were struck out by Mr. Rantoul, for no other alleged reason than that he had done so in the exercise of his prerogative as editor. Of course I could not consent to gratify his malice against one of the noblest of men, who had anticipated and spent his patrimony to maintain and improve the scientific side of the Institute, nor would I permit his bungling hands to spoil any composition of mine; and so my address, which he had contrived to smother in the Cadet Armory, was suppressed in the printing-office, and I received my manuscript back, he positively declining to allow me to decide upon my own composition after I had sent the copy at his solicitation.

Now, such being the circumstances of the eventful annual meeting of 1865, on which occasion Mr. Rantoul himself was elected to office and also appointed on a special committee to prepare resolutions of thanks to the retiring President, Mr. Huntington, and Mr. Rantoul knowing very well the impossibility of my being at the same time a candidate for the vice-presidency and a close rival of the successful candidate for the presidency, how can he explain the declaration in his address that I “*was a candidate for the presidency and pretty evenly divided the votes with Colonel Peabody, who was elected*”?

What is the sinister motive for this slanderous statement? It behooves Mr. Rantoul to retract and apologize, or to show some

reasonable foundation for his charge, or failing that, to *stand convicted of deliberate falsehood and slander*. He may take either alternative, but, unless he retracts publicly, he will receive from all fair-minded men the scorn which such despicable conduct deserves. Never, so far as I know, was there any rivalry by the supporters of contending candidates for any office in the gift of the Institute until his wire-pullers attempted to introduce the degrading methods of pothouse politicians, in which arts I am not skilled, and, thank God, could not be tempted to connive at. I can truly say that I never yet sought, much less worked for, any office, political or otherwise, notwithstanding Mr. Rantoul's repeated charges and insinuations to the contrary.

On the subject of my relations to Colonel Peabody I think it proper to add, that he and I had several conferences, both before and after his election, in regard to his mission to London. The Secretary's manuscript record for June 6, 1865, which Mr. Rantoul has read, but which was never printed, shows that Mr. Upham, senior, and I, were elected a committee to confer with our new President on the condition and needs of the Institute, and to suggest whatever we thought might conduce to the promotion of its interests. The result of this was a comprehensive statement of our needs in every direction. I wrote it myself, but preferred it should go out to England as Mr. Upham's, — he being so much my senior and so distinguished a personage.

Colonel Peabody asked for a brief synopsis of this statement to be referred to by him during the voyage. This, also, I prepared; and Mr. Putnam had it printed. Copies of it, doubtless, yet remain on the files of the Institute. This does not indicate that I had been sneaking about soliciting votes, as his rival for an office which I would have shrunk from accepting, at least while Dr. Wheatland was alive and a possible candidate.

At the next annual meeting, Vice-President Fowler in the chair, there having been some indications of jealousy concerning the confidential transactions between the President and the former committee, another committee, consisting of six members, was appointed to solicit aid for the Institute over a broader field

than the city of London, or whithersoever else the movements of the former committee were directed.

In order that there should be no partiality in the choice of this committee, a nominating committee of five, with Mr. Rantoul at the head, was chosen, who did the business; and the committee, elected accordingly, consisted of Colonel Peabody, and Messrs. Charles A. Ropes, R. C. Manning, William Sutton, F. W. Putnam, and Samuel P. Fowler.

Mr. George Peabody's munificent gift of \$110,000, procured through Colonel Peabody by the enterprise, the hopefulness and unflagging zeal of Mr. Putnam, upon the plan devised by the former committee, rendered the services of the latter committee superfluous.

I now approach the end of this reply to the president's discourse boastfully proclaimed as "POWERFUL," though, to me, exhibiting power only in that exercise of force in which, in another "Comedy of Errors," Antipholus of Syracuse bids Dromio, of Ephesus, *to stop*. If I have wearied your patience by the length of this essay, I feel sorry for you, but I pray you to remember that it is not because I have not tried my best to curtail this reply to an unprovoked assault. *As it is*, I have omitted, as I should prefer to in any case, the discussion of personalities that are not strictly germane to those questions which concern you and the Institute as well as myself. And I have even kept silent in regard to personal affronts, made deliberately, in the public meetings of the Institute, and in flagrant violation of the by-laws, because I have thought that another occasion might be more suitable for complaining of a personal insult, though of such exceptional gravity. Neither have I thought it necessary to point out specific instances of false deductions, or to rebut charges of insincerity for which there is no other foundation than my concurring in complimentary votes or showing the toleration which I deemed it my duty to show, as an officer of the Institute, of sentiments uttered by other members whose views were known to be not in accord with mine, and whom I had no authority to interrupt.

Moreover, the knowledge that it was unpleasant to me to have the unauthorized use of my name continued should be sufficient,

it seems to me, to induce any one, with even the crudest idea of what constitutes the gentleman, at least to relieve himself from responsibility for it, instead of persisting in it in the most offensive manner. But Mr. Rantoul has chosen another course, and I have no alternative but to give his position as dispassionate and thorough an examination and exposure as I am able to in the limited time at my command for which I am forced to lay aside work on more interesting subjects that I ought to be pursuing with entire exemption from such wanton and uncalled for interruption.

Now, bearing all these facts in your minds in regard to my and Mr. Rantoul's connection with the publications of the Institute, which I wish I could have imparted with greater brevity and yet with equal impressiveness, I trust you will be prepared to form an opinion of Mr. Rantoul's candor and veracity when I read to you some extracts from his address and correspondence. First, from his address, he says : —

“ We were then conducting two serial publications respectively called the ‘ Proceedings ’ and the ‘ Historical Collections. ’ . . . *I have read them under the dome of the British Museum.* Somebody must be responsible for the issue of these. Somebody must provide matter for these publications, select such parts of the recorded transactions as it was best to give to the world, edit them and see them through the press. In a broad sense the President and Secretary of a Society are responsible to the public for what it utters, but we had a ‘ Publication Committee ’ *of which the Chairman was the working member, and this committee exercised the discretion and did the work.* The Rev. John Lewis Russell was the Chairman of it from 1856 until May, 1861, when Abner C. Goodell succeeded him *for eighteen years.* . . . *The Committee made yearly reports and introduced some of its yearly Historical volumes with a preface.* ”

Next, I repeat from his letter of Aug. 19, 1899, to the Editor of the “ News ” : —

“ Of this group, Mr. Goodell is the last survivor. For a series of years he was, from 1861, chairman of the publication committee and became vice-president of the historical department the next year. No one was in a better position to know if anything irregular or questionable was done, or anything omitted, upon which the verdict of those investigators can be set aside.”

So, according to Mr. Rantoul, the Institute had a publication committee, of which the chairman was *working member*, and this committee, "*by its working member*,"—that is, by *me* during my "eighteen years" of chairmanship, "*exercised the discretion and did the work!*" and "*The Committee* introduced some of its volumes *with a Preface*." It seems to have served his purpose to omit to mention that the *Editor*, when there was one, performed his duties without the assistance of any committee. Mr. Nevins echoes the President's declarations on this point, probably under advice, he not knowing that there was not a word of truth in them.

Now Mr. Rantoul admits that "in a broad sense the president and secretary of a society are responsible to the public for what it utters," thus seeking for a chance to hedge when he is charged with monopolizing the functions of the publication committee and editor. Yes, and Mr. Rantoul well knows the Secretary *was* responsible for the management of the publications before we had an editor. Being *ex-officio* a member of the publication committee, he was entrusted, by the consent of the members, with all the functions of editor, and no other member of the committee had any share in the editorial work. I believe I was the first editor ever appointed, and the work I did in that capacity was acknowledged by me. This office I undertook at Dr. Wheatland's request, in order to relieve him of the increasing burden of our business with the printers. The committee on publication was the proper party to contract with the printer and had the power to decide the number of the edition and the size of the pamphlets and to pass on any question upon which the editor was in doubt. It also had power to appoint an editor. This was the limit of the functions it exercised.

All this Mr. Rantoul knows perfectly well. He knows that during the eighteen years from 1861, in which he says I continued chairman of the publication committee, succeeding Mr. Russell, and covering the period in which Mr. Rantoul advertised as editor, either alone or in connection with Mr. Upham, not one word passed between us relative to "providing the matter, selecting parts of the proceedings, or editing or seeing through the press," anything, except, *first*, my serial communications

prepared before I held any office, and deposited with the secretary to be inserted in the Collections, at such times and in such instalments as he, or an editor (if one should be chosen), should determine; and *second*, other papers read before the Institute or specially prepared, which were treated in like manner.

Now, Gentlemen of the Board of Directors, I hesitate to trust myself to characterize these statements of Mr. Rantoul. I prefer to leave them for you to pass upon according to your own candid judgment; and if you can find any excuse for his conduct which will leave Mr. Rantoul's reputation as a gentleman and a man of honor and veracity, untarnished, nobody will be more glad than I. But I am sorry to say I see no escape for him.

I have reserved for this place the remarks I promised to make on the subject of the waning appreciation of the "sacred relic," by the people of this vicinity after the report of 1865. Much may be said on this subject, but I will only take as little of your time as is necessary to refer you to the published sheets, in 1864, 1866, and 1874, setting forth the attractions of the Institute, and the notices of a similar kind which appear on the pages or covers of the Collections and Proceedings, where the old "relic" is wholly ignored. I find the same indifference shown in historical publication, out of the county.

One of the most noticeable instances of this want of interest occurs as late as 1890, in the account of Salem given in the Rev. Elias Nason's *Gazetteer of Massachusetts*. The author, a distinguished writer on New-England history, and fond of relics and romantic incidents of the past, spent some time in Salem, with which he had been long familiar, studying how he might improve his account of the city as given in earlier editions of his book. Mr. Varney, also, who revised the book, took great pains to include whatever was striking, and at the same time authentic; but not a word is said by either of these gentlemen about the *casa santissima*, which, as the committee predict, pilgrims of the future, flocking hither for the purpose, are to enter with bare heads and in their stocking-feet.

Mr. Rantoul seems to have aimed to distinguish his career as head of the Institute by inaugurating a system of advertising by which he has conferred notoriety on David Nichols's cowhouse

by such methods as bring into universal notice Beecham's Pills and Kennedy's Medical Discovery. I protest that "The Story of the Meeting-House," and other similar brochures, should not bear the imprint of the Institute, nor be sold on its account. Still, if Mr. Rantoul would feel aggrieved at being deprived of the vocation of agent for the publisher, which, for several years past, seems to have been his chief employment, he might be permitted to assume the work on his own account, and at his own expense; but I warn him to desist from the unauthorized use of my name as one of his means for carrying it on.

With questionable taste and ill-concealed sarcasm Mr. Rantoul refers to the variety of topics upon which I have spoken at meetings of the Institute or written for its publications. It would be more gracious in him to confess of how much of this work he has availed himself in the preparation of his own so-called productions.

Again, instead of sitting around here as the warden of David Nichols's cowhouse, contriving plans for the quixotic scheme of putting it under cover inside of our new quarters, publishing small fictions to magnify its importance, at the expense of the Institute, and snappishly endeavoring to preclude all doubt and denial by others, and in other ways intermeddling with their affairs, it would be more dignified and more consonant with the functions of his office if he employed his spare time in some way more honorable to himself and more useful to the Institute.

I would suggest that he vigorously set about devising some way by which the old literature that has been relegated to some unknown region may be brought back to our library shelves so as to enable the librarian to respond oftener than one time in three to calls for books which students of New England history find it desirable and necessary to consult.

I have prepared some votes which I offer as a fitting conclusion of this reply — on which I ask the action of the Directors — as follows: —

Whereas, Abner C. Goodell, senior vice-president of the Essex Institute, objects to the use of his name, subscribed,

ostensibly, to two reports, as a member of the committee or committees on the "Old Meeting House," so called, for the reason that he was never a member of any such committee, and never concurred in or subscribed any such report; and, —

Whereas, Said Goodell is the only survivor of those who it is claimed constituted said committees or either of them, —

Voted, In compliance with his request, that henceforth no copies of said reports be printed, sold, or distributed in the name of the Institute, by any person connected with the Institute, or acting under its authority, or the authority of any member, officer, or committee thereof.

And, whereas, It has been proposed to enclose said building — which now stands in the rear of Plummer Hall, and is commonly known as the "Old First Church," or the "First Meeting House," in Salem — within some other structure now built or hereafter to be erected for the Institute, —

Voted, That no further outlay be made either upon said building, or for protecting or enclosing it, as aforesaid, from the funds of the Institute, or by its authority, or the authority of any member, officer, or committee thereof, except by unanimous consent of the Directors.

A LETTER

TO

MR. THOMAS CARROLL,

OF PEABODY,

CONCERNING

THE FIRST MEETING-HOUSE

IN SALEM, MASS.

BY GILBERT L. STREETER,
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Member of the Institute.

SALEM, MASS.:
NEWCOMB & GAUSS, PRINTERS.
1900.

A LETTER TO MR. THOMAS CARROLL OF PEABODY,
CONCERNING THE FIRST MEETING-HOUSE
IN SALEM.

MY DEAR MR. CARROLL:—

You have asked me what are my views as to the genuineness of "the first meeting-house," so called, in the rear of Plummer Hall. I will tell you, with pleasure, and with entire freedom and frankness, and, if you please, I will give a synopsis of the evidence upon which my opinion is based. I know that, as a zealous antiquarian, you are in touch with all the curious old matters that turn up from time to time, and your excellent judgment will enable you to contribute to the final settlement of this interesting question. But, before I proceed, allow me to tell you a little story.

Many years ago, on one fine summer day, I had the curiosity to trace the course, then and now dimly discernible, of an ancient road, used by the first settlers in traveling between Salem and Marblehead, in one direction, and between Salem, Peabody and Boston in the other. It touched Salem in Blubber Hollow, between Boston street and Witch Hill. This ancient way, in its course to Marblehead, passed westward of the hill known as Norman's Rocks, and intersected Highland avenue at a point between the Rocks and the first house beyond. Thence it passed directly across the Pastures, near where the powder house stood, until it reached what was known as Stearns' Pasture, then turned to the south and passed close around the Upper Branch of the Mill Pond, beneath the cliffs there, where part of the sustaining wall still remains. Passing over the eastern slope of the hill, and across the plain where the French settlement now is, it crossed the B. & M. Railroad just above the first cut beyond Castle Hill. Thence it crossed the old Metcalf meadow, by a log bridge, which spanned Clay Brook, to the rising ground towards the Forest River road. We lose track of the road in the vicinity of the Piekman Farm, but it probably led on to Marblehead by way of Legg's Hill.

A branch road seems to have passed down the western side

of the Mill Pond and formed a connection with the head of Broad street. Its course could be traced at the time I speak of. From this latter point a bridle-path passed up over the flank of the Lookout Hill, through the Devil's Gate, so called by the up-towners, and joined the Marblehead road near the powder house. This made a complete and convenient circuit of the hills above the town.

Now the old building we are to talk of stood upon this Colonial Highway, and was said to have been, and doubtless was, a part of an ancient tavern, known as Tompkins' Inn, and it was situated at the point nearest to Boston street, where the end of Proctor street now is. I published an account of this pleasant ramble at the time in a Salem newspaper, and in it I said :—

“The reader may have seen this old tavern, back of Blubber Hollow, and may have mused upon its antiquity. Some, who prefer what is interesting to what is strictly matter of fact, like to consider it as the original first church,—or meeting-house, as the godly and extra anti-papal fathers of the early days styled their houses of worship.”

I thus happened to be the first person who called public attention to this ancient and interesting building, as it then was, and one of the few who saw it in its dirty and dilapidated condition. It had, for many years, been used as a barn, or cow-house, and you will notice that at that time I disclaimed belief in the legend that it had been “the first meeting-house.”

Not long after, in 1859, the Essex Institute took the matter up, and, through a committee, decided that here was indeed the “first meeting-house,” and they had what was left of it fixed up, in the rear of the Plummer Hall, and set apart as a “sacred relic” and “holy house” of God.

For the reasons given I have been exceedingly interested in the controversy which has recently arisen as to whether this structure was really what it was supposed to be, and whether, after all, a mistake has not been made, and whether the Institute's committee were not too hasty in their conclusions. And as the statements thus far made upon this subject do not present the case in the way in which it lies in my mind, I desire to review, briefly, the whole subject, avoiding all personal considerations, or allusions, and freeing the case from extraneous ele-

ments, so that we may see what is the simple historical truth. The facts are very few and easily understood.

The first information that history gives us concerning the first meeting-house in Salem is furnished by Dr. Bentley, who states, in his history of Salem, that "an unfinished building of one story was used occasionally for public worship in Salem from 1629 to 1634. A proper house was then erected by Mr. Norton, who was to have one hundred pounds sterling for it." Dr. Bentley had access to certain records, or memoranda, concerning our early settlers, which have since been lost, which enabled him to relate some details which other historians have not known. The "proper house" thus mentioned is the "first meeting-house" of Salem. We know nothing about its size, or appearance, as the records give no account of it. Not a single dimension is known, and its area is simply a matter of conjecture. It must have been apparently a building of considerable size, as it cost one hundred pounds sterling, which was a large sum in those days.

Prof. John Fiske, the historian, states that the pound sterling of that time was equivalent to about twenty dollars of our money. If this ratio is correct, the new meeting-house must have cost about two thousand dollars. Brooks Adams says, in his book on Massachusetts, that the pound in the early days was equivalent to nearly twenty-five dollars now. This would make the cost of the meeting-house about \$2500. And this provided for the walls and roof only, as the glazing and plastering, or "daubing," as it was then called, were added afterwards, and paid for extra. Salem was rich enough to have a meeting-house of sufficient size to accommodate all its inhabitants, then numbering several hundreds, and as the inclination was not wanting, it is reasonable to believe that they did have it. Indeed, the descriptive phrase, "proper house," used by Dr. Bentley, doubtless referred to its sufficiency in size as well as its suitableness in other respects.

This house served, with repairs, until 1639, when it was enlarged, by adding on a piece "twenty-five feet long and the breadth of the old building."¹ What the breadth of the old

¹ Town Records, April 12, 1638.

building was is unknown. But the addition seems to have been smaller than the original house, for it cost only sixty-three pounds sterling, while the original cost one hundred pounds. The assumption which has been made, that the old and new parts were of equal size, seems to have no foundation whatever.

The enlarged meeting-house was sufficient for over thirty years more, when, in 1670, a second meeting-house was built, on the same land, and two years afterward the old meeting-house was taken down, by vote of the town, and the materials "reserved for the town's use."¹ Sums of money paid for taking down the old meeting-house are specified in the town records. The constables were "appointed to name thirty men a day to appear to help take it down, and they are to begin at Strong Water Brook, and so downwards to the lower end of the town."²

In 1673 the town voted to erect a public building to be used as a town-house, school-house, and watch-house, and directed the carpenters to use in its construction the "timber of the old meeting-house, according as the timber will bear."³ They obviously thought some of the timber would not "bear" using again. It had already been in service for forty years, and some of it may well have been unfit for further use. How much was actually used in the new building is not known, nor whether that which was used, if any, came from the original meeting-house of 1634, or from the enlargement in 1639. All we know is that the meeting-house had been taken down, and that it was intended to use some of the materials in a new town-house, if any were found to be fit.

And this vote of the town, in April, 1673, is the last thing on record concerning the first meeting-house. There is not a single historical fact relating to it to be found in any public or private document since that time. And that was two hundred and twenty-six years ago. Every additional statement concerning

¹ The second meeting-house was 50 by 60 feet, and 20 foot stud.

² Town Records, August 17, 1672. This shows that the building must have been of very much larger dimensions than the one in question. It was so large that the town deemed it necessary that relays of thirty men a day, from the different sections of the town, should be drafted to take it down.

³ Town Records, April 21, 1673.

the old meeting-house, made since that distant period comes from the copious sources of conjecture, inference, and imagination.

Now, having exhausted the known facts, we might leave the subject.

THE TRADITION.

But there is a tradition. I need not say that tradition is not history, nor need I add that tradition does not command confidence unless it has been widely disseminated in the community in the past, in some definite form, and runs well back to the events to which it relates. Unfortunately the tradition referring to this structure does not conform to these tests. It had been almost unknown until a recent period, and seems to have been confined to a single family. This family is unable to trace the origin of the tradition, or even to state its precise purport. The story was never current in the community.

Our historians, apparently, knew nothing of it. Bentley, who describes all the meeting-houses, makes no allusion to the possible survival of this one. Felt, in his *Annals*, makes no reference to it. Neither did Mr. Upham in his discourse upon the First Church, in 1826. All these gentlemen described the meeting-houses with particularity, and were curious about the antiquities of Salem, but neither of them seems to have heard of this tradition until it was made known by the Institute's committee.

It was, as I have said, confined to a single family. It was unheard of by the public until about forty years ago, when it was brought to light by Mr. Caleb Pierce, an estimable gentleman, whom some of us recollect. Now this very limited circulation of the tradition starts a suspicion that there may have been a mistake somewhere.

But what was this tradition? What did it say? Mr. Pierce tells us, and he alone knew the story. He got it from Benjamin Proctor and his sister, both excellent people, and they received it from the Pope family. He said he had seen the Proctors and "found that they well remembered that the old tavern was always known as having been made from the First Meeting-house. Mr. Proctor says he has heard his father say so more than a hundred times."

This, then, is the tradition, and the whole of it, and it will be noticed that it did not say that the little building then incorporated in the old tavern was the "first meeting-house," but that it was "made from" the first meeting-house. This is a very different matter, and the committee seem not to have noticed this important limitation of the statement.

If the building was, after all, merely "made from" the materials used in the first meeting-house, the question naturally arises, how much, and what kind of the old materials were taken? Was it a few joists, or rafters, from the original structure, or was it some newer stock used in the subsequent repairs or enlargement of the house? The Town-house was taken down in 1760, so that whatever timbers it might have contained that had been in the meeting-house of 1634, had already been in service for one hundred and twenty-six years, and had been used in two different buildings. Was there any Methusalah in town aged enough to be able to identify the original parts? Must not some of them have become rather shaky and unreliable?

It seems, indeed, incredible, that after this lapse of time the whole framework of the church of 1634 was still in good condition, and could be picked out of all the materials used in the Town-house, the precise pieces, those, and all those, and no others, and could be put together again as they were originally.

The committee make no allusion to these practical difficulties, but seem to have been very easily satisfied that the tradition meant what they desired it to mean.

They found certain indications of a second-story floor in an end of the building. After a study of "peculiar tenons" and mortices, they decided that this floor was a gallery, and hence that the building must have been a meeting-house. But still they had doubts, for, they said, they were satisfied that "the frame was the only part of the building that afforded unmistakable evidence of having belonged to the original construction." The overhead floor, if the building had been a store-house, might have been a loft for merchandise; if it had been a dwelling, as in fact it had been, it might have been for a chamber. But, subsequently, the committee discovered some more mortices and tenons, and in a second report reverted to their

original decision—it was a meeting-house. This shows simply how little evidence will suffice to enable conscientious persons to believe what they want to be true.

The whole discussion of the gallery question, however ingenious and interesting, cannot be considered as possessing much historical value, and yet upon this slender basis has been reared the whole fabric of this restored first “meeting-house.”

Persons who visit this relic are surprised to find it so small, and their suspicions of a mistake are at once aroused. The few decayed timbers attached to the inside walls of a small modern edifice do not suggest an ancient meeting-house. This diminutive framework surely could not have sufficed for the goodly company of people who had accompanied Conant, and Endicott, and Winthrop. They find it difficult to believe in its genuineness.

This point of dimensions is, in fact, an insuperable objection to the claim which is put forth. Salem, as I have said, was then a place of several hundred inhabitants. Mr. Felt thinks there were 900 in 1637, which may be an over-estimate. But this we do know, that the immigration in 1633 had been very large, as many as fourteen and fifteen ships with passengers arriving in some single months. In that year, says Dr. Bentley, “When the inhabitants of the towns in the vicinity of Boston began to emigrate such families as arrived in Salem were easily persuaded to remain; and in 1634 Salem began to flourish.”

It was in this year of prosperity that the meeting-house was built. Is it probable that the small affair in the rear of Plummer Hall—17 by 20 feet—would have been deemed sufficient? It was the only public building in town, wherein town meetings and all other assemblies were held, as well as religious services.

Mr. Felt, our annalist, computes that 226 houses were built in Salem prior to 1638. Allowing only four persons to a house would give us 884 inhabitants. From 1636 to 1641 one hundred and sixty new members joined the church. These, with the old members, and the many inhabitants who did not belong to the church, were all to be provided for in the meeting-house. For in those days everybody went to meeting, and if a few held back, they were under pressure and even under compulsion to

attend. And yet this building would seat only 75 to 80 persons, even when crowded together.¹

Other towns had ample houses of worship. There is no instance on record of a meeting-house in any town of the colony so small, or so inadequate to the population, as this alleged meeting-house of 1634. In Dedham, for instance, in 1637, only two years after that town was settled, when the population was much smaller than that of Salem, they built a meeting-house 36 feet long, 20 feet wide, and 12 feet stud. Can we believe that at that very time Salem was content with a meeting-house scarcely more than half as large? In New Haven, in 1637, while Salem was still using its first meeting-house, they had a meeting-house 50 feet square, and New Haven was much smaller than Salem. In Plymouth, as early as 1627, seven years before, they had a "very large" meeting-house, as stated by a person who saw it in that year. It had a flat roof, and this was so ample that six cannons were placed upon it to aid in the common defence. Why should we doubt that Salem, several years later, was equally well furnished? And does not the cost, \$2000, or \$2500, show conclusively that the Salem meeting-house was a large and sufficient building?

These considerations long ago led me to the conclusion that the frame-work in the rear of Plummer Hall is not that of the first meeting-house. I have never felt called upon to promulgate these views, but now that the question has been re-opened, and especially as you solicit me, I see that the public demand a satisfactory settlement of the whole matter. If they have to abandon the pleasing illusion which they have cherished so long, they will at least have the satisfaction of knowing that it is better to be historically accurate than to be sentimentally mistaken.

¹Allowing a space 18 by 30 inches to each person, upon a plain bench, with an aisle two feet wide from front to back, and a platform four feet square, for pulpit, deacon's seat, and communion table, with a small allowance for steps or a ladder to reach the gallery—all of which limits are really too small—the area would only admit the seating of 75 or 80 persons, crowded.

SOLUTION OF THE QUESTION.

In conclusion I wish to say that there is another possible and not difficult interpretation of the meaning of the tradition, as given by Mr. Pierce. I will submit the proposition, with much confidence, that, as the tradition was handed down in a Quaker family—that of the Popes—the “first meeting-house” referred to was the first Quaker meeting-house, and not that of the First Congregational Church. There are several things which favor this view and seem to confirm it. The first Quaker meeting-house was built by Thomas Maule, about 1688, and it stood in the upper part of Essex street.¹ The structure in the rear of Plummer Hall is large enough for a Friends’ meeting, and there is, therefore, in this case, no difficulty about its size. The term “meeting-house,” as applied to it, instead of the word church, is quite in accordance with Quaker custom.

It is certainly curious that while none of the old families in the First Church seem to have had any knowledge, or suspicion even, of the possible survival of their first house of worship, a prominent family of the Society of Friends, or Quakers, kept alive a tradition of the “first meeting-house.” This challenges our serious attention. How happened the old Puritan house of worship to be cherished only in the memories of a family of Quakers? How came it, or any part of it, to be transported and set up on a Quaker’s land?

Surely the members of the First Church must have had an affectionate regard for the sanctuary in which the Higginsons, and Roger Williams, and Hugh Peter had preached to their ancestors. They would have witnessed its destruction with regret, and if any observed what became of its ancient framework they certainly would have been of the number. But, after the edifice had been demolished, in 1672, and the timbers had been scattered and destroyed, or had been used in the town house, its remains were lost to view, and seem to have been forgotten.

Subsequently, the Popes, earliest of the Quakers in this town, and persistent adherents of that sect down to our own

¹The Quakers formed the second religious society in Salem.

day,¹ related to their families that the old tavern contained materials that had been used in "the first meeting-house." They had every reason to cling to the memory of their old meeting-house, for they and their relatives and friends had been cruelly treated in this town for fidelity to their religious convictions.

The original Quaker meeting-house, built about 1688, as I have said, ceased to be used for purposes of public worship in 1718, and was turned into a dwelling-house, and served as such until 1788, when it was sold to Robert Wallis. What he did with it is unknown. But it is important to notice that at this time there were living in Salem two men, Enos Pope, 2nd, and Enos Pope, 3rd, both Quakers, upon whom this whole question depends. They seem to have been the authors of the tradition related by Mr. Pierce to the Institute's committee. Indeed, Mr. Pierce distinctly says: "It is from him (Enos Pope, 3rd), that I (first) got the account." It is not heard of prior to their time. Mr. Pierce states that Enos Pope, 2nd, was born in the old tavern house in 1721. Enos Pope, 3rd, may have been born in the same place, and probably was.

Now these two Quakers undoubtedly knew what became of the building in which they and their friends had attended meeting for many years. And this makes it quite probable that they actually saw their "first meeting-house" demolished, and its materials used, in whole or in part, in enlarging the old tavern building, in which they were born. In their old age they related this story to their children, and in due time it became a family tradition; but in later years, within our own day, the precise meaning of the tradition was lost, and it was mistakenly supposed that it referred to the original house of the

¹Joseph Pope, who was here in 1636, was before the Court, with his wife, in 1652, for attending Quaker meetings, and subsequently they were excommunicated from the Salem Church for holding Quaker views. Several others of the family were persecuted at different times for similar offences.

Dr. Henry Wheatland, in his notices of the Pope family, in the Institute's Historical Collections, says:—

"The study of the early history of this and the allied families leads to an interesting investigation into that portion of our colonial history which relates to the persecution of the Quakers, several members having suffered punishment, fines, imprisonment, etc., for their firm adhesion to the principles of this sect."

First Church, instead of that of the Society of Friends, or Quakers, to which it really applied.

I submit this interesting solution of the matter for your consideration. It is certainly in conformity with the known facts in the case and with the precise terms of the tradition, and it seems to me to be much more credible than the theory set forth by the committee.

I hope these brief notes and comments may interest you, and I shall be pleased to hear what degree of importance you may attach to them.

Yours, with great respect,

GILBERT L. STREETER.

SALEM, MASS., January 1, 1900.

THE
“OLD RELIC”
AT SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS

ITS IDENTITY
WITH THE
FIRST MEETING HOUSE
QUESTIONED

A LETTER
TO
MR. THOMAS CARROLL,
OF PEABODY,
CONCERNING
THE FIRST MEETING-HOUSE
IN SALEM, MASS.

BY GILBERT L. STREETER,

Member of the Institute.

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